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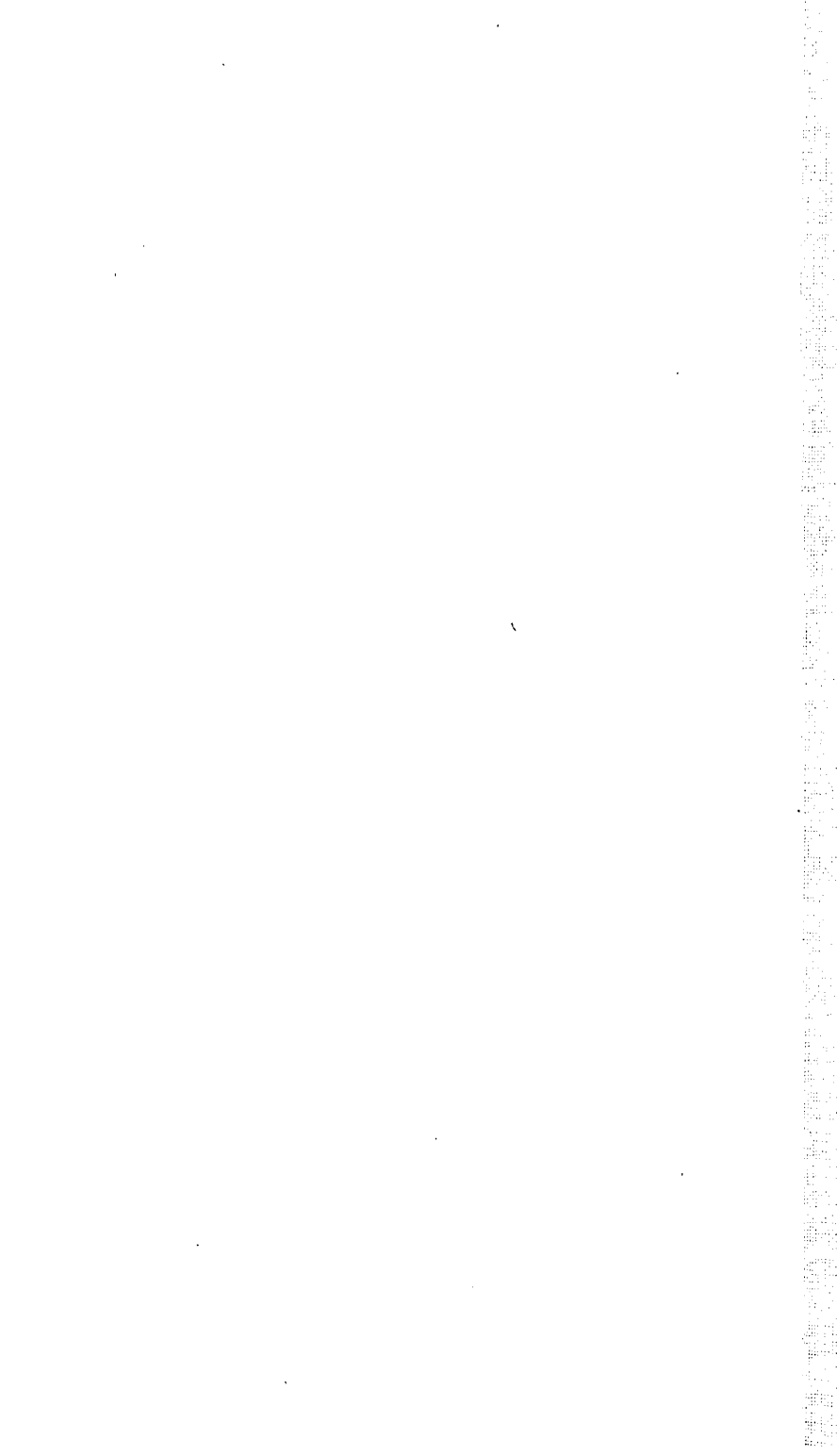
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L E T T E R S

WRITTEN IN FRANCE,

TO A

FRIEND IN LONDON,

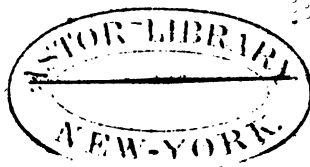
BETWEEN THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 1794,

AND

THE MONTH OF MAY 1795.

^{W.}
By Major TENCH, of the Marines,

LATE OF HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP ALEXANDER.



L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following Letters were written under very adverse circumstances, in a part of France remote from the beaten track in which travellers generally keep, and where curiosity has seldom led to observation. As connected with that stupendous object, which has concentrated the attention not only of Europe, but of every quarter of this planet where human communications reach, they are offered to the Public. A considerable part of the collection was unavoidably dedicated to matters which must, from their nature, be uninteresting to a majority of readers; but the author trusts to the importance

portance of the subject to compensate for the poverty of the relation. Since his return to England they have been revised; and would have been earlier sent to the press, had not reasons of a private nature interposed to procrastinate his intention.

LETTERS

LETTER I.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

On board le Marat,
Brest, 9th Nov. 1794.

A PERFORMANCE of those flattering promises, which we exchanged at parting, to meet for a few days in London, about Christmas next, provided the exigencies of service would permit, must be suspended for the present—to be fulfilled when—is one of those secrets of futurity, which I dare not trust my imagination to anticipate.

The wayward fortune of your friend has again* exposed him to be taken by the “insolent foe,” after an unsuccessful, but I trust not inglorious combat, against very superior force. This disastrous event happened on the 6th instant. †——

—— ——— ——— ——— ——— ———
—— ——— ——— ——— ——— ———

To

* The writer was taken prisoner in the last war in America.

† Here followed a minute relation of the battle, which the Alexander sustained for two hours and a quarter, against

To our great surprize, the enemy's ships continued to fire upon us after our colours were struck. At first we conceived, that this unprovoked prolongation of hostilities arose from their not seeing that we had surrendered; but when their knowledge of this event could no longer be doubted, and the firing did not cease, some among us, joining to this conduct a recollection of the decree of the convention, which forbade quarter to be extended to Englishmen, were almost ready to believe, that it was designed to be

three ships, each of her own strength, and just before she struck against five. But as all the circumstances of the action, and of the causes which led to it, have been detailed by him, who like Cæsar, knew not only how to execute, but to narrate deeds of glory, I have thought it right to suppress my description; and beg leave to refer the reader to the official letter of Captain, now Rear Admiral Bligh, which appeared in the Gazette, either about the latter end of January, or the beginning of February, 1795.—The names and force of the squadron by which we were taken, were as follows, under the command of Contre-Amiral Neilly.

	Guns.		Guns.
Le Tigre, - -	74	La Fraternité, - -	40
Les Droits de l'Homme, 74		La Gentille, - -	40
Le Jean Bart, - -	74	La Charente, - -	40
Le Pelletier, - -	74	Le Papillon, - -	14
Le Marat, - -	74		

executed

executed upon us; and so irritated were our seamen, by this apparently wanton continuation of attack, that they had once nearly determined to renew the fight, and sell their lives as dearly as possible. At length, however, their firing ceased.

Knowing from sad experience, that in such a situation all distinction of property is confounded, and that the officers and public stores of the ship become at once the indiscriminate prey of the enemy and their own crew, I left the deck, and descended into the bread-room. There I had in the morning deposited one of my trunks, out of which I filled a clothes-bag with such necessaries as I thought would be most useful to me, and left it in the charge of my servant, while I endeavoured to save a part of what a very large trunk, lodged in the marine store-room, contained. But this resolution I was incapable of effecting. The cock-pit, which I was obliged to pass through, presented such a scene of misery, as banished every feeling, but sorrow and pity. I found myself encompassed at once by the dead and the dying. The groans of the latter, joined to the cries of the wounded, on whom operations were

B 2

performing

performing by the surgeon, and to the blood which overflowed my feet, filled me with horror and disgust.

“Sight so deform what heart of rock could long

“Dry-ey’d behold?”——— MILTON.

It “quelled my best of man;” and, after two ineffectual attempts to penetrate across this stage of woe, I returned to my servant, and made a few farther arrangements of what was left to me.

By this time the French boats had boarded us, and taken possession of the ship. When I attempted to ascend to the deck, I found every hatchway guarded by French sentinels, who refused to let me pass. In vain did I expostulate with them; all the answer I could obtain was, “*Citoyen, tels sont mes ordres. Je suis républicain!*” At length I saw a French officer, and begged his interference, which, after some hesitation, was granted, and on his speaking to the sentinel, I was suffered to proceed to the deck, where I found all that confusion and disorder reigning which I had expected. The Admiral had, I learned, been already sent away. I enquired

quired for the French commanding officer, and was directed to a respectable looking old man, to whom I presented my sword, telling him, at the same time, that I hoped, and trusted, we should be allowed to retain our private property, and be protected from pillage. He answered me, that we certainly should. I had, however, but just turned from him, when a French officer seized on my cross-belt, and demanded it. On my refusing to comply with this mandate, he said it was arms; which I denied, and bade him, if he thought I had not made a full surrender of those, to search me. To all the arguments and protestations which I could use, this gentleman thought proper to answer by force only; so that, finding farther resistance vain, I yielded up the belt to him, when his motive for divesting me of this dangerous implement of war, at once appeared—a large silver plate, which was attached to it, being the bait. This he very composedly took off and put in his pocket, trailing the belt carelessly along after him as he marched away.

The commanding officer being extremely

urgent that we should quit the ship directly, I got leave to make another effort to recover some more of my effects; but universal plunder and uproar had now taken place. The store-rooms and cabins were broken open and pillaged, and the most brutal excesses committed. I was surprized to find the French seamen and soldiers even more forward than our own, in searching for wine and spirits, and equally eager to intoxicate themselves: a new trait in their national character.

About four o'clock I quitted the *Alexander*, carrying with me my bag, which was all I had been able to save, and was conducted, with several other officers, on board *Le Marat*, a name of ill omen, and not too predictive, thought I, when I heard it proclaimed, of the virtues of humanity and generosity. Here I found our gallant and respected commander, who introduced me to Captain *Le Franq*, the commander of the ship, by whom I was civilly received. This gentleman speaks very good English, which he learned in the last war, when he was a prisoner in England and in the East Indies. In a very candid manner, he repeatedly desired us not to be under

under any apprehensions about the treatment which we were to receive; for that if he, or any of his officers or men, should be found guilty of ill using prisoners of war, the republic would punish the offenders. When we complained to him of having been plundered, he protested, that he had given the strictest orders to forbid it to those who had boarded us; and that he was sure they could not be the authors of our losses, as his officers were all *gentlemen* (he spoke in English) and his men in a state of the most exemplary discipline. We answered, that among the great number of boats which had boarded the *Alexander*, from every ship in the squadron, it was impossible for strangers to point out either the names or the persons, or the ships to which the parties might belong; and that we chiefly attributed our losses to the precipitancy by which we had been compelled to quit our own ship. Upon hearing this, Captain Le Franq very fairly and honourably proposed, that one of ourselves should be selected, and sent on board the *Alexander*, in order to bring away whatever could be found belonging to any of us. We thanked him for his offer, and embraced it; but the officer

who went on this service was able to obtain very little. Some few articles, indeed, he *did* recover; and to-day, as many more of us as chose to go again on a similar errand, were permitted, and French officers were sent with us, to enforce the order for a search: it was conducted in a very open and liberal manner, although it ended almost as fruitlessly as the former, the possessors of their newly-acquired property having taken effectual means to secrete nine parts in ten of it from our scrutiny. My large trunk, however, I discovered, close to the door of the store-room, wherein it had been deposited. I blessed my good fortune, and sprang to it: but what was my mortification, to find, that of all its former treasures (having closely packed it with my most valuable articles) nothing remained but two bits of black ribbon, serving to fasten my gorget!

We had been more than two hours in Captain Le Franq's cabin, without having had any refreshment offered to us, when, at about six o'clock, supper was announced. The captain, inviting Admiral Bligh, and all of us, to follow him, led us into the ward-room, where we found the banquet spread, and all the officers of the
etat-

etat-major, or ward-room mess, assembled. I was no stranger (as you know) to the customs of the French on land, which were never remarkable for delicacy and cleanliness; but I had never before seen their mode of living on board their ships of war. Our entertainment was served up on a large clumsy deal table, which was placed (to speak in sea-language) not fore and aft, but athwart ship, very awkwardly and inconveniently, surrounded by benches and lockers, and in place of a table-cloth was covered by a piece of green painted canvas. Sweet are the joys of hunger, on such an occasion! After a fast of thirteen hours, and that in a day of such unceasing agitation as we had passed, neither this circumstance, nor the garlic with which the meat abounded; nor a want of knives and forks, and a change of plates; nor the battling of the *mouffes* (dirty ragged cabin-boys) for the scraps which were left; nor the appearance of the company, who all sat with their hats, or red caps, on; nor their vociferation of the word *Citoyen*, the only title they used in pledging each other to republican toasts, could prevent me from making a most satisfactory repast. Nothing short of the evidence of my senses

senses could, nevertheless, have made me believe, that so much filthiness could be quietly submitted to, when it might be so easily prevented. Indeed, a ship is in all situations very unfavourable to scrupulous nicety; but no description can convey an adequate idea to a British naval officer, who has not witnessed it, of the gross and polluted state in which the French habitually keep all parts of their vessels, if I may judge from what I see in this. And to complete the jest, Captain Le Franq has more than once boasted to us of the superior attention which he pays to the cleanliness of his ship.

In the course of our conversation at supper, we learned, that this squadron had been purposely dispatched from Brest, to intercept us on our outward-bound passage, being furnished with exact intelligence of the time we had put into Plymouth, and of our force and destination*.

But

* The Alexander sailed from Portsmouth on the 13th of September, having under her command the Canada of 74 guns, the Adamant of 50, the Thorn sloop, and a convoy bound to the Mediterranean. Owing to foul winds we put into Plymouth on the 16th, whence we sailed on the 26th of

But to proceed with the adventures of your friend in a regular detail. After supper, Admiral Bligh, and those officers who had saved their beds, went up into the cabin, where places to sleep in were allotted to them, while a sail was spread below, for the majority who had lost their's, in which number I was included. This humble couch, which was as good as circumstances would allow our hosts to furnish, or as we could reasonably expect, would have been perfectly satisfactory to us, had we been permitted to retire to it. But our entertainers, no longer checked by the presence of their chief, who had retired, and

of the same month. The *Adamant* and *Thorn*, with the merchant ships, parted from us off Cape St. Vincent. The *Canada* was in company when we were chased, saw us engage, and strike. Her signal was made, to join and support us; but this, which she attempted, a manœuvre of the enemy prevented her from executing: Captain Hamilton, who commanded her, then very properly began his retreat. Malevolence was not wanting to attack his character upon this occasion; but I am happy in bearing my testimony, that farther perseverance on his side was not wished by us, as it would have caused only an useless effusion of blood, and the capture of two British ships of the line, instead of one.

elated

elated by victory, and by an anticipation of the triumph which awaited them at Brest, on the novel and glorious achievement of capturing a British 74 gun ship, now called for a fresh supply of wine, and began to sing, in a loud key, republican songs, which were interrupted only by questions to us, that delicacy should have withholden them from asking. One of them, taking a candle in his hand, begged me to look at two prints of heads, as large as life, of Pelletier and Marat, "Ah!" said he, pointing to the latter, "behold the friend of the people! he who shed his blood for them!" I looked, as he had desired me, and thought I saw all the diabolical qualities, by which that monster was marked in his life-time, depicted in this portrait. Prudence, however, kept me silent. Poor Pelletier came in for no share of this gentleman's eulogy; and as to Robespierre, they all spoke of him, and "*his reign*," with great bitterness and detestation.

We were compelled to rise at a very early hour next morning, the sail on which we had slept being wanted. I would willingly have walked on the quarter-deck, according to the
English

English custom; but it was so crowded by the men, and so greasy and slippery, that I found it impracticable. The captain, overhearing us talk on this subject, very gravely said, that he never allowed his people to eat between decks, but always made them do so upon deck, *in order to keep his ship clean*. When we saw that after these meals they neither scraped nor washed the decks, we were at no loss to account for the state in which we found them; and no doubt those whom it professionally concerned, duly noted this curious improvement in the œconomy of a ship of war.

About eight o'clock the boatswain and his mates went to the different hatchways of the ship, and summoned the crew in a loud voice, "*aux prières*." My ignorance of what these *prayers* might be, did not long continue. The quarter-deck was immediately thronged by men and officers, who with united voice sang the Marseilles Hymn, with a fervor and enthusiasm of manner which astonished me. I had heard it at a distance on the preceding evening; and upon enquiry learned, that it was thus publicly performed twice a day, by order of the government.

ment. The sublime music of this fine lyric composition, the gaiety breathed by the *Carmagnole*, and by many other popular airs which are continually in their mouths, during their most ordinary occupations, must produce a prodigious effect on the pliant minds of Frenchmen, and highly contribute to invigorate that spirit of idolatry for a republic, and that hatred and contempt of monarchy, which it is so much the interest of their leaders to encourage. I need not point out to you the good policy of such national establishments, and how deep a knowledge of human nature they manifest; perhaps no other country is so culpably indifferent to the foundation of similar institutions as our own. We fire, indeed, a few lazy guns on the anniversaries of the King's Birth, accession, and other similar occasions; but we never stimulate the passions of our soldiery, by recalling to their memories, in periodic exhibitions, the days on which their forefathers won the fields of Agincourt, Blenheim, and Minden; nor re-animate the ardent energy of our seamen, by public recitals of the victories of a Russell, a Hawke, a Rodney, and a Howe. And yet the histories of the greatest nations, both ancient and modern,

modern, sufficiently demonstrate the power of such exhibitions over the human mind; and justify me in affirming, that no people ever rose to superlative dominion who did not employ them. How would the flame of heroism be enkindled in our youth, on hearing these celebrations performed by the veterans of Chelsea and Greenwich! And what still more important sentiments would be diffused through the mass of our people, if they were frequently reminded of those glorious æras, when John was compelled to sign Magna Charta; and when the declaration of the rights of the people was made the foundation of William's throne!

This digression towards a country, which busy remembrance points to with unceasing anxiety, could not be suppressed. To proceed with my observations here:—The republican spirit is inculcated not in songs only, for in every part of the ship I find emblems purposely displayed to awaken it. All the orders relating to the discipline of the crew are hung up, and prefaced by the words *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité, ou la Mort*, written in capital letters. The *bonnet rouge*, or cap of liberty, is erected in several places, and
crowns

crowns the figure on the prow of the ship, which represents the demagogue whose name she bears, and on which is written an extract from the declaration of the rights of man. In the cabin (to which the officers are entitled to resort at all times) *Liberté & Egalité* are pourtrayed in female characters, the former brandishing a sword, and the latter nursing a numerous offspring, with impartial attention to the wants of all. But a picture of another sort also caught my eye : it was pasted on the *outside* of a door, which led to the apartment of an officer, and represented the prime minister of Great Britain conducting to a *guillotine* his blindfolded sovereign. The person to whom it belonged, on seeing me regard it with mingled indignation and contempt, would have begun a conversation on the subject, had I not prevented him by turning my back and walking away. Indeed, next to the poor emigrants, Mr. Pitt, or "*Ministre Peet*," as they always call him, seems to be the primary object of their abhorrence. Hated name! never breathed but in curses, never coupled but with execrations! To hear them, one would suppose that he is the only man in England hostile to their growing republic. Even
Captain

Captain Le Franq, who has certainly hitherto behaved towards us with more delicacy than the other officers, did not scruple to call him "a Robespierre." To argue with these people I find impossible; "but to be grave exceeds all power of face." My only resource, on such occasions, is to ask some question foreign to the subject they wish to talk upon: even here I can make no progress; I am either repulsed by want of common knowledge, or bewildered in contradiction. Having established it as a maxim, that some degree of information may always be gained by talking to men of their own professions, I am as inquisitive as I modestly can be, about their naval institutions. But, if my question be heard by more than one, such shocking abrupt oppositions of opinion follow, and so pertinaciously does each party defend his assertion on the most ordinary points, that my only alternative, to prevent a perfect equilibrium of mind, is to place the little confidence left at my disposal in the champion who has been least violent and vociferous; agreeably to the old observation, which says, the still stream is the deepest. Their ignorance, indeed, upon almost every subject which

has been stated, is deplorable. One of them, in pure simplicity of heart, asked me if London were as large as Brest? I was contented to answer him, by saying I had never seen Brest. He was greatly surprized, on being informed that London is a sea-port; and, to recompense me for my intelligence, told me Paris did not enjoy that advantage, as he had heard, for he confessed he had never been there. A second had read Shakespeare, "and did not like him; he was "too *sombre*."—"Pray, sir, do you allude to any particular play?" He seemed confounded; but, after some hesitation, said, "Yes, to *Paucippe*."—"To *Paucippe*!" exclaimed I; "you mistake the name, there is not any of his plays which bears such a title." He was confident he was right, and therefore I begged to know the fable of the piece, or the names of the other characters; but with them, this critical reader did not pretend to any acquaintance. I need not observe to you, that none of these officers had ever served in the navy of France, but in the most subordinate capacities, under the king's government, except the captain, who had commanded a cutter under Monsieur de Suffrein, but who
had

had nevertheless been bred up in the service of the East India company.

We anchored in Brest-Water about three o'clock this morning, and I presume to hope we shall very soon be sent on shore ; but whether, or not, on parole, does not seem quite clear. They answer with great ambiguity, and apparent unwillingness, to all questions on this head, pretending that they are ignorant of what is customary, but assuring us that we shall be treated well. To be shut up in a prison, in this cold and dreary season that is coming on, is what I dread to look forward to. We frequently describe to them the parole which is allowed to all French officers in England. But, whatever is to be our lot, I shall not wonder at their taking almost any step to rid themselves of so numerous a troop of intruders on their society and table. Their own mess consists of sixteen persons, besides the captain, who lives in common with his officers, although this association, they tell me, is forbidden in their naval instructions ; but it seems these little deviations are winked at, in certain cases, to prevent the too weighty tax of a separate table. We breakfast every morning at nine o'clock on

Gloucester cheese (taken out of an English prize) good brown bread, called *pain d'égalité*, which they bake on board, and a thin acid claret, of which the Frenchmen drink very liberally. This does not seem to argue the scarcity of flour among them, which has been so much insisted upon in England. A hint of this was dropped, and great derision followed, on their part, at the idea of starving such a country as France, by cutting off a few casual supplies by sea. We dine between twelve and one, and sup between six and seven o'clock. On all these occasions there is a sufficient quantity of provisions provided, though the dirty state in which it is served up, would disgust a Hottentot. I have mentioned before, that during our meals we are surrounded by filthy ragged cabin-boys, whose appearance, contentions and impertinence, are intolerable. Among this crew of little blackguards, two were pointed out to me as the son and nephew of *Delcher*, who is one of the representatives from the Western Pyrenees to the convention. 'It is certain, that when I challenged the boys with it, they confirmed it to me, and seemed to glory in their situation. I was also shown

shown a third boy, about eleven years old, who is the son of an *emigrated nobleman*. In him, nature is not quite subdued: "*Le petit — pleure quelquefois,*" said one of the lieutenants to me.

I have forgotten to mention before, that on the day of our being brought on board the Marat, we were shown their furnace (which is the oven) for heating shot. It is well contrived, and the balls, by means of a pair of bellows, would soon be made red-hot; but I doubt not that "even-handed justice" will oftener render this dreadful implement of destruction, like "the ingredients of the poisoned chalice, rather "the plague of the inventor," than the destroyer of the objects of its vengeance. The motion of a ship at sea must, I apprehend, not only cause its effect to be very precarious, but its use very dangerous. Be this as it may, every thing here was prepared, the faggots were laid, and the shot were placed between them; and they assured us, that in the moment we had struck, they were just going to heat them for us: a confession which, considering the odds that we had fought against, was not very ho-

nourable to republican gallantry. All their ships of war, they told us, were provided with similar furnaces.

In the little time I have been in my new situation, nothing has surprized me more than the quantity of English articles I every where observe. The cheese, as I said before, was *Gloucester*; to which I might have added, that the plates it was served upon were *Stafford*, and the knives it was cut by were *Sheffield*, while the coats, hats, and shoes of those who were eating it, were also chiefly of British manufactures. "*Prize, prize,*" is the only answer we receive to our enquiries. Surely what one of their officers told me cannot be true! Seeing me just now looking up one of the arms which help to form this capacious port, and which is crowded with shipping, he assured me that they were all English, and not less than 400 in number. It is too well ascertained, that the French have been, during the present war, wonderfully successful against our trading vessels. Their frigates, I am informed, cruize in small detached squadrons to the westward of Europe; whilst we confine ours almost totally to

to the Channel, which I presume to consider a very injudicious disposition of them, in a war wherein the enemy have no privateers, and when consequently the little ports on the French coast, within Ushant, should be less objects of our jealousy than heretofore. Provided our grand fleet can, after a parade off Brest, return into Spithead or Torbay, without being materially damaged by the weather, we seem to be satisfied, and conclude that all is going on well on the waters.

How I shall be able to procure money for bills on London, during my probable term of residence in this country, is not the smallest of my inquietudes. I have hinted the difficulty to Captain Le Franq; but from his real or assumed ignorance, one might be led to suppose, that paper-money had always been the only currency of France. The little cash I had by me, I took care to secure in my pocket, which escaped unsearched. It is, however, very inadequate to administer to my wants, stripped as I am almost to my last shirt. Small as it is, something like an attack was made upon it just now. An old *militaire*, who is captain of the

troops on board, came to me, and, with many professions of esteem, offered to serve me, by giving me, in exchange for English guineas, twenty-four livres in paper, each; assuring me that I should subject myself to disagreeable consequences, by offering to purchase with gold, when I might land. He brought the *assignats* in his hand to tempt me: but I begged leave, with a profusion of compliments, to decline this courteous proposal. Surely gold and *assignats* cannot be deemed by all Frenchmen of equal value! *Nous verrons!* At present all is mystery to me.—This said captain has a son on board, a fine youth, who is a corporal in his father's company.

Admiral Bligh is gone on shore to-day with the French captain, in order to be taken before the representatives on mission here. He will probably gain some intelligence of what we are destined to, and we expect his return with impatience. We are too well acquainted with his feelings and sentiments, to doubt that he will hesitate to sacrifice even his own personal comforts to promote ours, and to prevent our being separated from him.

Upon

Upon surrendering our swords we were given to understand, that they should be restored to us, agreeably to the usages of war among civilized nations, but nothing has been lately said of this restitution ; and the French officers, on being asked about it, only shake their heads, and plead ignorance.—How unlike the polished generosity which once distinguished Frenchmen towards enemies, who, in submitting to the imperious necessity of war, yielded up arms without a stain !
——Adieu !

LETTER

LETTER II.

Normandie, prison-ship, in
Brest-Water, 1st Dec. 1794.

I MUST continue to write on to you, as if I had the means of regularly transmitting my letters. In the horrid dungeon in which I am now immured, it forms my only consolation to talk to you, although you cannot hear me; and to complain to you, although you cannot succour me.

Two days after the date of my first letter, we were all, except Admiral Bligh, sent from Le Marat, on board this prison-ship. Such a change did not much surprize us; for the reception which the Admiral experienced from the representatives, was so cold and mysterious, as to afford neither intelligence nor consolation; and Le Franq, who was his introducer and interpreter, affected utter ignorance of their intentions towards us.

Our situation here is extremely irksome. The captain of the vessel and his lieutenants are men

of ferocious manners and brutal behaviour, high-flying patriots, whose supreme delight consists in blaspheming all revealed religion, and in abusing the English nation. In the day-time we have nominally the liberty of walking upon the deck; but this privilege is frequently so curtailed, by the caprices of our gaolers, as to amount almost to a prohibition. At night we are crowded into a small cabin, and hardly allowed light enough to undress ourselves by. Luckily, however, I have recovered my mattress and a couple of blankets. We eat with the officers of the ship, who are allowed a *traitement*, or table-money, of three livres six sols a day, besides a ration of provisions, for each of us; so that the fault does not seem to be imputable to the government. But either the markets of Brest are extravagantly dear, or these patriotic gentlemen make an advantage of us; for hardly a day passes in which we have a sufficiency of any thing but coarse brown, or rather black, bread, so full of sandy particles as to be almost uneatable. Our breakfast at first was bread and butter, and a small red wine; but of late the butter has been taken away, and either Newfoundland salt-fish,

or

on shore. What think you of these specimens of republican honour and delicacy to children of misfortune, like us? I was so transported by indignation at those who had thus endeavoured to cheat me, that I could not help asking them, on their attempting to renew the subject, if the law did not forbid the depreciation of paper, when bartered for gold. This regulation, they pretend, relates to French gold only. To exchange a *louis* for more than its nominal value in *assignats* were criminal: but mark the curious distinction! An English guinea, and a Portuguese johannes, are articles of merchandize, whose worth depends on the election of the buyer. Well! I have yet four English guineas left! Let me look at them! Oh “ye ever-
“ young, loved, and delicate wooers! whose
“ blush doth thaw the consecrated snow on
“ Dian’s lap;”—and before whom even the sternness of modern republican virtue melts into thin air,—tenaciously will I treasure ye up!——Adieu!

LETTER

appropriated to a similar use, which also seem quite full, are moored close to us. On the return of some frigates from a cruize, a few days since, we received an accession to our number which surprized me:—twenty emigrants—who for the crime of being Englishmen were taken out of an *American* ship at sea, after which the vessel was suffered to proceed on her voyage to Philadelphia, and the rest of the cargo remained unmolested.

I find that I acted prudently in not parting with my guineas. Since I have been here, my brother-officer from Le Marat has honoured me by a second visit, and offered *thirty* livres for a guinea, pointing out one of the serjeants of the guard, through whom the business might at any time be transacted. I again begged permission to decline this benevolent gentleman's proposal, and also two others of a similar tendency, which were made to me here. Nor did the event deceive my expectation; for to-day a little Jew, who mounts a cockade, and belongs to a frigate in the harbour, came on board, and secretly gave me two hundred and fifty livres for five guineas, declaring it to be the market price
on

Lord Howe on the first of June. He told me that he was very politely received, and was pressed to accept of pecuniary assistance, which he declined; but Admiral Villaret plainly hinted to him, that he was obliged to suppress much of the regard which he wished to show to him, from the delicacy of his situation, in the present temper of the times. Monsieur Renaudin, late commander of the *Vengeur*, who was taken, after the sinking of his ship, on the first of June, and is just returned from England, has visited him on board *Le Marat*. This gentleman declares, in loud terms, the humanity of the English, and the polite attentions he received from many of our most distinguished naval officers, whose generosity left him no want: Of this list I remember the names of Lord Howe, Admiral M'Bride, Captain Bentinck, and Captain Schomberg. Monsieur Renaudin also made a tender of his purse to Admiral Bligh; but I have reason to believe, that it was not done with that explicit frankness, which could hope to supersede the offer of Monsieur Villaret, even had it been made previously to it. By the way, the re-appearance
of

of Renaudin, does not a little astonish the French; for the convention, in order to gratify the national vanity, and inflame the minds of the people against the English, had publicly announced, that *Le Vengeur*, with *all her crew*, sunk with colours flying, disdaining to accept of quarter from slaves whom they despised; and a decree was even passed, to perpetuate this heroic resolution, by erecting a monument to the memory of the event.

I am sorry to say, that Monsieur Renaudin echoed the profession of his commander in chief, in lamenting that the political prejudices which reign here will prevent him also from acting up to the extent of his wishes, in attending to the English, and the Admiral in particular. What evils do not these political phrenzies generate? Be this as it may, I am all alive at the thought of the scene about to burst upon me; and there are moments when I am almost tempted not to regret a captivity, which opens an inlet into this extraordinary country at such a period as the present; but these momentary illusions flit before the memory of the scenes I have left behind. Can curiosity, all-powerful

as it is, stand in opposition to love and friendship? Let me, however, but quit La Normandie, and then we will strike the balance. To-morrow I am to bid adieu to her darksome round: how joyfully! And yet I shall not leave without a tear of commiseration those gallant comrades, with whom I have so lately fought, and so severely suffered.

The few remarks I have been able to make are entirely nautical. I shall detail them to you when I can revise them at my leisure at Quimper. From a fear of being searched, I have used some extraordinary precautions to secure them; and if they be found they will not be easily understood, for I have so transposed the natural order of the sentences, and so intermixed words from all the languages which I could recollect (not excepting that of New Holland) that it would puzzle the interpreter of the convention to decypher them.—
Adieu.

LETTER

L E T T E R IV.

Le Marat, Brest-Water,

15th Dec. 1794.

THAT leisure which I so lately looked forward to at Quimper, seems likely to be afforded to me here. I was removed from the prison-ship on the 8th instant, and allowed to bring my servant with me, expecting to be sent immediately on parole; but this event, like the resolutions of the Dutch councils, seems to be put off *ad referendum*. We receive daily assurances that it is to take place, and are daily disappointed of seeing it arrive. I enjoy, however, the society and conversation of the Admiral; and as he does not speak French, I am the chief medium through which he communicates with those who surround him, Captain Le Franq, who is married, living almost entirely on shore. So that here I remain, with nothing to do but to ask and answer questions from morning to night. These are chiefly nautical; and as you know my sentiments on

the consequence of all naval concerns to Englishmen, I am induced to believe you will concur with me in thinking the subject momentous, however trite the remarks, or unimportant the observations of your correspondent may prove.

Whether Selden's assertion, that "we have an hereditary uninterrupted right to the sovereignty of our seas, conveyed to us from our earliest ancestors, in trust for our latest posterity," be perfectly deducible either from the nature of things, or from the authority of history, I shall not stay to enquire. But I will venture to affirm, that when we suffer this right, however acquired, to depart from us, the sun of England may be truly said to be set for ever.

When the question of the relative naval strength of the two nations is agitated, which it often is, I am tempted to cry out to my country, in the words of the Grecian oracle,—
"Trust to your wooden walls."—I am the more confirmed in this opinion, from reading every day in the *bulletins* of the astonishing successes of this people, both in the Pyrenees, and

on

on the frontier of Holland. They openly boast of being able, in a short time, to penetrate to Madrid; to force the German powers to peace; and to totally subdue the Dutch.—And then “*Delenda est Carthago.*” I accuse not those with whom I converse of using this, or any other Latin phrase; but you will smile on being told that they habitually call us Carthaginians, and themselves Romans. They pay us, however, the compliment of declaring, that we are the only enemies worth combating. They stigmatize the Spaniards as cowards: at German tactics, when opposed to the energy and enthusiasm of republicans, they laugh: Dutch apathy can alarm no one. But this respect is confined to our naval character. Our impotent interference and puny attempts on the Continent they treat only with ridicule and derision. This spirit is not new: A noble lord, now high in rank in the British army, told me nearly twenty years ago, when we were on service together in America, that when he was very young, and travelling in France, a general officer, on hearing him relate that he was designed for the army, expressed his surprize that

any Englishman, to whom the choice was left, should hesitate to prefer entering into the navy. Are the scorn and contempt of our enemies necessary to teach us in what our true grandeur, our real national pre-eminence, consists? It is certain that at present we far surpass them in the number of our ships, in the dexterity of our seamen, and in the interior regulations of our service; but I am persuaded, that they will hereafter strain every nerve to equal and exceed us. I know, that by very high authority the naval power of France has been denominated "forced and unnatural;" but let those who apply to it epithets so devoid of knowledge and reflection, remember the short period in which Louis XIV. created this navy, and its resurrection in 1778, when, to the astonishment of all Europe, notwithstanding its wasted and disastrous condition but fifteen years before, it suddenly started up, singly, to contest the empire of the sea with Britain, and for four years (until the 12th of April 1782) poised the scale of victory against its formidable antagonist.

Nature has denied to France a port in the
Channel,

Channel, capable of receiving large ships; but if art can supply the deficiency, they seem determined to employ it to its utmost extent. Whether the works at Cherbourg are proceeding or not, I cannot exactly learn; but it is certain, that the scheme of rendering it secure for line of battle ships is not utterly abandoned; and who can doubt, that it will either be carried on there, or in some neighbouring port, with accelerated vigour, on a return of peace? Their warlike spirit now runs so high, and is so universally diffused, that many years must elapse ere it will subside. It is a train of gun-powder, to which, in the present temper of the people, a spark will give fire. A hatred of England is fostered with unceasing care. In nothing does this inveterate spirit against us demonstrate itself so bitterly, as in the abhorrence with which they always mention our taking possession of Toulon: "You gained it like traitors; you fled from it like poltroons." On the celebrated measure of making them a present of four ships of the line, and six thousand of their best seamen, which were sent to Brest and Rochfort from the Mediterranean;

they often make themselves merry, and us serious, by pointing out the ships as they now lie near to us, equipped and ready for sea; and by affirming, that the supply of men thus received enabled them to fit out those cruising squadrons which have so sorely distressed our commerce.

How incumbent upon us, then, is it become to guard against the effects, which a propagation of this principle will inevitably produce! Naval perfection is, I am well aware, like all other perfections, placed beyond human reach; but the road to excellence is open. In it we have advanced before our rivals in all branches of naval superiority but one: I mean ship-building. Our vessels want length, and in the construction of their bottoms are undeniably very inferior to those of our enemies. Hence the continual escapes of the French fleets from ours, by superior sailing, when we want to bring them to action, which no skill, diligence, or bravery in our commanders can surmount. We possess models from which we might learn to correct our errors, and supply our deficiencies; but these patterns we are more ready

to destroy than to imitate, as if fearful lest comparison of them with our own productions should demonstrate our inferiority. Thus do we continue obstinately to grope on in a dark and superannuated track, merely because our ancestors preceded us in it. The truth is, the art of ship-building has been cultivated in France by men of science, enlightened by a previous study of its theory: whereas in England it has been committed to the management of those, who for the most part have certainly had no room to boast of a scientific education, or a laborious examination of principles; and who could justly lay claim to the merit of observation only. In a country so eminent for mathematical acquirements as ours, is it not extraordinary, that this most useful branch of knowledge should have been so rarely applied to national advantage? What treatises on this important subject can we oppose to those, which have been published by French academicians, and by Bouguier in particular?

“ Oh! for a bridge to pass over two hundred thousand *sans-culottes!*” I hear often exclaimed. Not that bridge which, according to Milton,
Death

Death consolidated across Chaos, could be more fatal to the remaining innocence of our first parents, than such a structure, in the shape of a superior fleet, would prove to their English descendants. To prevent its erection, or to have a chosen band of pioneers ready to destroy it, must be our concern. I am, however, well convinced, that hitherto they have never seriously intended to invade us. This bug-bear has now for more than a century been employed to affright us; to cramp our foreign efforts; to diminish our sum of productive labour, one of the most important of national considerations; and to debauch the manners of our artisans and peasants in camps and barracks*.

I have been curious to hear their account of the signal defeat, which they experienced on

* Since the above was written, I have read Major Cartwright's opinion on this subject; and am only more thoroughly convinced from his arguments, that neither a "*Saxon militia*," or any other militia, beyond the regular establishment of the kingdom, is necessary for our preservation from invasion, which can be effected by a strong naval force only.

the first of June. This ship was not in their fleet, having been *launched since*; but Captain Le Franq commanded on that day L'Entreprenant, of 74 guns, and some of the other officers were also parties concerned. Not the invincible superiority of British seamen in fighting and managing their ships, but "Treason! treason! joined to the ignorance, obstinacy, and cowardice of Jean Bon St. André, caused the loss of the day." This naval dictator, who from a Hugonot curate at the foot of the Pyrenees was raised to be a member of the convention, and delegated by that body to superintend the equipment, and direct the manœuvres, of a great fleet, is never mentioned but with execration. His star set with that of his master, Robespierre. I have heard an officer assert, that he *saw* him, in the heat of the engagement, seized with a sudden emotion, start from Admiral Villaret, near whom he was standing, in the stern-gallery of La Montagne, and run pale and breathless down to the lower gun-deck, under a pretence of encouraging the men; nor could he be drawn thence, until the danger was over. "His seamanship," continued
this

this gentleman, "consisted in having made one " short passage. He might be a good *ecrivain* " *ou secretaire*; but for the marine! *Oh! le* " *vilain* ——!" But for him, they say, the action would have been renewed, agreeably to the wishes and representations of Monsieur Villaret; for " *the English were beaten, and might* " *have been destroyed.*"—I cannot help thinking, that if *Jean Ben St. André* really did prevent a renewal of the battle, he is not altogether so obnoxious to the reproaches of his fellow-citizens as they describe him to be. France is not the first republic which has profited, by declining to combat a victorious enemy.—A second cause of the disaster of the day arose from Lord Howe having gained possession of a copy of the French signals, which was procured by "the guineas of Pitt;" so that he was enabled to divine all their intentions, and to counteract them. It is certain, that some of their captains were gullotined, after the return of the fleet to Brest, but whether on a suspicion of cowardice, or perfidy, I know not. How consolatory to French vanity are these satisfactory solutions of this dreadful overthrow! Happy people! who,

In all your conflicts against other nations, conquer by superior skill and bravery only; and are never vanquished but by disparity of number on the side of your enemy, or by treachery among yourselves!

An error, which you with myself, and all other Englishmen, have fallen into about this engagement, I must beg leave to correct, or at least to offer you my reasons for believing it to be one. — Lord Howe's account of the action states, that *two* ships of the enemy were sunk. Of *Le Vengeur* we will not speak: here proof is positive. But I am persuaded she was the only one. This the French positively assert; and I beg leave so far to join with them, as to observe, that when in Admiral Montagu's squadron (of which the *Alexander* formed a part) we were chased, on the *ninth of June*, by the shattered remnant of their fleet, which was steering to Brest, it was composed of *nineteen* sail of the line. Now, I apprehend it to be certain, that on the day of battle this fleet consisted but of twenty-six ships, *six* of which were captured and brought into England; so that it should appear the *seventh*, *Le Vengeur*, made up the original number. But beside the
strong

strong presumption which this circumstance affords, I have received assurances from so many quarters (and particularly from one not remarkably friendly to the present system) that I am convinced one ship only was sent to the bottom on the first of June. Indeed, in matters of this nature, owing to the passions of those engaged, and the innumerable causes which obstruct vision, we should always receive similar relations *cum grano salis*. In Lord Rodney's action of the 12th of April 1782, a French ship, said to be Le Diademe, was supposed to be sunk; but I believe subsequent accounts clearly evinced that such an event did not happen. However, the French are more than even with us upon this head; for I have heard some of them positively affirm, that they saw three, and others four of our ships, among which was the Queen Charlotte, go down on the first of June. And when I assured the gentleman who furnished me with this last piece of information, "on the evidence of his own senses," that he had been deceived, he only shook his head, and continued, like your friend, a sceptic.

The remainder of this letter shall be dedicated

cated to a detail of those detached parts of their naval institutions, customs, and present state, which I have been enabled to pick up. In general I think them inferior, because less easily practicable, to our own, but many of them deserve consideration. "*Fas est et ab hoste doceri.*"

The discipline of their men struck me at the first view as contemptible; and yet I must confess that I was surprized by the state of subordination in which I afterwards found them. The seaman or soldier addresses his commander by the title of *Citoyen*, and receives in return the same appellation; but in the five weeks I have lived among them, I have witnessed only one instance of disobedience. The offender was a soldier, who refused to assist in performing some of the ordinary duties of the ship. A court-martial, or *conseil de discipline* as they call it, was immediately holden upon him, by order of Captain Le Franq, who prosecuted. It consisted of a lieutenant of the ship and three seamen, and of two serjeants and a corporal of the troops. The prisoner pleaded ignorance of the law on this head; and that when he had voluntarily enrolled himself to serve as a soldier, it was
under

under an idea of not being *compelled* to do that which *ought to be the result of inclination* only. This defence was deemed so unsatisfactory, that the offender was sentenced to three months imprisonment on shore.

All the judicial institutions of their navy, and the punishments allowed to be inflicted, as well as the cases to which they apply, are strictly defined. The *conseil de discipline* is impowered to try only inferior officers and men. The officers of the *état major* (answering nearly to those of our ward-room) and all above them, can be tried only by a board of officers, who assemble in the admiral's ship. Neither of these courts has the power of condemning to death: all offences of a capital nature must be tried before the revolutionary tribunal. The punishments enjoined are flogging in certain cases, the number of lashes being limited; running the gantlope; ducking from the yard-arm; confinement on shore, or in the lion's den (boatswain's store-room); stoppage of pay; and degradation. The three last extend to officers. A prisoner's allowance of wine is always stopped. No man can be punished but by a sentence of the *conseil*
de

de discipline; and, in carrying on the service of the ship, it is positively directed, that no "French citizen" shall, on any account whatever, be struck; but he may be *pushed* as violently as may be found necessary. For giving a box on the ear an officer would be cashiered; but to dash a man's head against the ship's side, so as to crush his nose, or beat out his teeth, by rushing suddenly upon him, is allowable.

The ranks of officers differ from ours: those only who command line-of-battle ships, and frigates carrying 18-pounders, are properly styled captains. Other frigates are commanded by lieutenants; and vessels of 20 guns or under by ensigns. Common courtesy, however, with them, as with us, annexes the title of Captain to all commanders. Agreeably to this classification the pay is regulated, but it is at present found so grievously inadequate, as to cause great complaints; and yet the French are unanimous in affirming, that all ranks are not only better paid, but better fed, clothed, and treated, than under the old government. Besides his pay, every officer, including the warrant officers and midshipmen, is allowed a *traitement*, in lieu of

the table which was formerly kept at the king's expence. The *traitement* of admirals and captains is very handsome, and suited to their rank, as they are enjoined to keep separate tables: that of Captain le Franq is 24 livres a day. No half-pay has yet been settled upon, or even promised to, the French officers. The seamen are divided into four classes: the pay of the highest class is $40\frac{1}{2}$ livres a month; of the second $36\frac{1}{2}$; of the third $33\frac{1}{2}$; and of the lowest $30\frac{1}{2}$.

Their gradations of command are very similar to our own, from the captain to the lieutenants, ensigns, and boatswain. The office of *pilote*, which formerly answered to that of master with us, is abolished. It is particularly enjoined, that the officers be put at five watches, if the state of the ship will allow of it. The lieutenant of the watch is stuck up on a little pedestal, which overlooks the helmsman, whence, except in emergencies, he never stirs during his guard, the ensign appointed to assist him, who is distinguished by wearing a gorget, being charged to superintend the execution of his orders.

The general uniform of both their navy and army is a blue coat, with a red waistcoat and breeches: the naval facing is white edged with red, and that of the soldiery red; both services wear gold epaulettes. The naval button is an anchor, surmounted by the cap of liberty, and encircled by the words "*La République Française.*"

Of the minute regulations established for dividing prize-money, I cannot speak; but the general principle on which its distribution is founded appears to me worthy of attention. Two-thirds of every prize are put into a common stock, which is shared by the whole navy, and the remaining third is divided among the captors. A captain receives but in a proportion of 5 to 1 to a foremast-man; a captain of troops, and a naval lieutenant, as 4 to 1; a naval ensign, subaltern of troops, surgeon, and commissary, as 3 to 1; midshipmen, boatswains, gunners, &c. as 2 to 1; and quarter-masters, and the lowest rank of officers, as $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 1. The first part of this system, which relates to the common stock, were valuable, if it could be impartially carried into execution; but from

the daily fluctuation of the parties concerned, I do not see how it could be reduced to practice among us, without giving rise to perpetual law-suits. Some modification of the latter part would render its adoption very desirable in a country where, hitherto, this important part of the reward of naval toils has been apportioned with the most cruel and insulting contempt of the feelings and necessities of the lower orders.

Drugs and instruments of surgery are, I apprehend, very scarce at present in France, as hand-bills are distributed over the fleet, enjoining the officers who may board prizes to be particularly careful in preserving them for the use of the republic. Those belonging to our surgeons were seized upon this pretence; and, notwithstanding representations were made to reclaim them, as private property (which they were) they were neither restored, nor an equivalent for them offered. Every French 74-gun ship is allowed a surgeon and five assistants. How many lives might be saved in our fleets, were our medical establishment equally liberal! Permit me here to observe to you, that the faculty owe obligations to the revolution. It is
well

well known that they were heretofore, in France, treated in many instances highly unbecoming the regard so justly due to a profession, whence mankind derive so many benefits. Surgeons on board (and I am told on shore) are now considered with all the respect due to gentlemen, and live in the society of the principal officers.

The French marine corps, which, similarly to ours, was instituted for the service of the navy, is abolished, and troops of the line embarked in their room, who are subjected, by an express order, which I have read, to all the general regulations of the crew, and placed under the absolute command of the sea-officers. The detachment on board this ship belongs to a regiment in the Western Pyrenees : it is composed of stout healthy young men, who, if not formidable from discipline and knowledge of tactics, are full of energy and republican enthusiasm. I must here remark a vulgar error, which prevails too much among Englishmen who have never travelled out of their own country—that the lower orders of the French are puny debilitated creatures, inferior to ourselves in physical powers. Could these persons

be present at a muster of the seamen and soldiers of this ship, they would find their size and strength the same as their own, and in hardihood they are certainly superior to us. I never before saw people support cold so well ; this is owing to their having no stoves on board to heat themselves by, a privation which extends to the officers, not from election but necessity ; for Admiral Bligh's stove was immediately transported to La Montagne, for Admiral Vilaret, and one which belonged to the ward-room of the *Alexander*, became the prey of Monsieur de Nieully.

All their men seem to be well supplied with clothing. It is furnished to them by the government at an easy price, which has remained the same, while on shore it has been trebled. Of this they are obliged to keep up a stated quantity, and whenever men are turned over from one ship to another, a list of their clothes is sent with them, and if it falls short of the prescribed regulation, the men are forbidden to be received. Each man is supplied with a hammock and two rugs, but no bed. In case men belonging to ships are compelled by bad weather, or any other cause, to remain for the night
on

on shore, there is a receiving-house, to which they can retire, where they are both fed and lodged until they can be sent on board.

The allowance of every person in the fleet, without distinction, is as follows, and like every thing else is *decimalized*, or regulated by periods of ten days. On four of them they have half a pound of fresh beef, on two of them half a pound of salt beef, on two of them half a pound of salt pork, and on the remaining two four ounces of salt fish, with oil and vinegar to eat with it; one pound and a half of soft bread daily—no butter or cheese; on fresh-meat days, a soup for dinner made of the beef, with a little thickening in it; every evening a soup composed of four ounces of rice, pease, or beans, and oil; a wine quart of thin claret daily—such is the ration in port. At sea, salt beef and pork are served on the fresh-meat days, and, except in exceedingly bad weather, bread is every day baked; when this cannot be done, the same quantity of biscuit, of an excellent quality, is issued. I have seen them grin, when grinding it, at a recollection of its superiority over the black unpalatable stuff, which, they say, bore the same name

under the former government. You, who well know the allowance served in our navy, may, if you please, compare the two institutions, and decide which is preferable. I am of opinion that this is best calculated to preserve health, particularly in long voyages and hot climates; but how far British seamen could be brought to relish its adoption, is not so evident. Observe that these pounds are *French*, which exceed our common weight by full two ounces; and that nominal or purser's pound, which is used by order on board our ships, by a great deal more.

I remember to have formerly treated the measure of sending a frigate off Brest, to count the number of the fleet, or to see whether it had sailed, more lightly than it deserved. I now see that both roads may be inspected, particularly the outer one; and even of the inner one a sufficient degree of information may be generally gained by a good glass. The French boast of the holding-ground in Brest-Water; but if I may judge from the frequent dragging of anchors which happens in moderate weather, it must be far inferior to that of Spithead,

The

The truth is, they are in general shamefully careless in mooring their ships: they over-lay each other's anchors, and thereby cause foul berths, without reflection or ceremony.

Of real seamen they have few left, many thousands of their best having been drafted early in the war, and sent to serve as soldiers on the frontiers. Robespierre (whose execution was certainly the triumph of humanity, but not of the allies) by annihilating their foreign commerce, destroyed the only nursery which can ever supply the consumption of a numerous navy. Their ships are, therefore, filled with landmen, who, previously to their being drafted for actual service, are sent on board certain vessels fitted on purpose, where they are taught all the elementary parts of practical seamanship. The number of boys on board is likewise very great, and for their instruction (as also for that of such men as may be desirous of improvement) a schoolmaster is allowed to every ship, whatever be her size. It is enjoined, that these preceptors be capable of teaching the theories of navigation, gunnery, fortification, and the common parts of the mathematics; and farther,

ther, that they be men of good moral characters, and great suavity of manners.

They have a naval committee for examining of midshipmen and inferior officers, to determine whether they be qualified to take charge of prizes. Nothing short of irremediable necessity will justify a commander for entrusting a prize to the direction of any person who has not undergone this examination,

They water their ships in the roadstead from floating tanks, which are brought alongside, whence the water is forced by pumps through hoses into the casks on board.

Every ship is furnished, at the public expence, with a superb set of charts of every part of the known world: those of our country are particularly excellent: there is hardly a little harbour in Britain or Ireland which is not laid down in them. With us this important charge is left to the prudence and honesty of a master; and how many accidents have befallen our ships by a neglect of it, need not be here enumerated.

I am assured, that there are in the dock-yard here three covered docks, under which the
workmen

workmen can carry on their operations in all weathers.

An experiment, of covering by a strong wooden case the rudders of ships to the water's edge, which leaves them only just room to work, is now trying on two or three of their frigates. It is intended to prevent the rudder from being unshipped, if struck by a sea.

The ponderous guns with which they used to overload their ships are displaced for others of a size more manageable. No ship now carries heavier metal than a French 36-pounder. Their first rates have sixteen ports on the upper and middle deck, and fifteen on the lower, except *La Montagne*, whose upper and middle deck are pierced with seventeen ports, and her lower with sixteen; so that, exclusive of those on her quarter-deck and fore-castle (twenty in number) she mounts exactly 100 guns. They do not, however, in any of their ships, turn their quarter-decks to so much advantage as they might. In this ship the five aftermost and most useful ports are blocked up by standing cabins, and have no guns provided for them.

When

When the fleet weighs anchor, each ship's signal to heave up is made in succession. This method prevents the confusion which we experience in weighing all together; but, on the other hand, it precludes that emulation to be first, which a competition causes; they are accordingly very tedious in performing this operation.

Official *bulletins* of all public events, which the convention find it their interest to promulge, are printed on board La Montagne, from a copy transmitted from Paris, and distributed, at the expence of the government, to the officers and seamen of every ship. This is a popular measure, which wonderfully flatters the lower orders, who deem themselves in possession of all the secrets of state, and conclude that politics are no longer a mystery. I frequently read these chronicles, which are always filled with details of victories over their foreign enemies, and addresses to the convention from the departments. I was greatly diverted in reading one of the latter, from the "Popular Society" at Brest, on the occasion of the Alexander's colours being presented to the convention,

convention, by the Major of Admiral Nieully's squadron, who was dispatched expressly to Paris on this important mission.—“ Behold,” says the orator, “ *Pitt* himself virtually brought “ to the bar of the convention, when the British banner is prostrated before your august “ assembly !” Notwithstanding this flourish, and fifty more of the same sort, I am told that the inhabitants are strongly suspected of incivism, and closely watched.

It has been customary to extol the French signals, as superior to our own; but any man capable of judging, who will compare the two codes, must be convinced, that those now in use in the English fleet are more simple in their principle, more exact in their arrangement, and more easy in their comprehension. The French were long our masters in this art, which lately our naval officers have certainly carried beyond them. Their superior dexterity in making and answering them must not be confounded with the signals themselves. In this respect, from being earlier and more closely trained, I fear it will be found (though with many exceptions on our side) that they surpass
us.

us. There is on board every French ship a class of youths, called *pilotins*, who attend solely to this part of naval duty. They are placed under the direction of an experienced quartermaster, and hold a rank immediately below that of midshipman, into which body they are promoted from time to time, according to their merit.

Of their deficiency of naval stores every day furnishes me with fresh proofs. The ships by which we were taken had, after a cruize of a few weeks, scarcely a coil of rope to repair their running rigging, or a stick to supply any loss which a sudden gust of wind might have occasioned. But how desperate must the state of France have been, had the American convoy been intercepted by Admiral Montagu! You know already in part my sentiments on that extraordinary failure. Let me now give you fresh cause for amazement; but remember, that I quote the words of another person without asperity, and without pretending to assign to what quarter the culpability of that shameful miscarriage on our side attaches:—Admiral Villaret said a few days since, to a British officer, who

who was in Admiral Montagu's squadron :
“ *Were you not astonished to see me chase you, on
“ the 9th of June last, with my crippled fleet ?*”
—“ *Yes,*” was the answer.—“ *My only reason for
“ it was, if possible, to drive you off our coast, as
“ I momentarily expected the appearance of the great
“ American convoy, the capture of which would
“ have ruined France at that juncture. Why you
“ did not return to the charge, after running us out
“ of sight, you best know. Had you kept on your
“ station two days longer, you must have succeeded,
“ as, on the 11th of June, the whole of this
“ convoy, beyond our expectation, entered Brest,
“ laden with provisions, naval stores, and West
“ Indian productions.*”

If my cheek reddens on recording this declaration of an enemy, it is with indignation only.

Hitherto I have not witnessed among the French, either here or in the prison-ship, a single trace of divine worship. The *Decadis* are indeed distinguished by a more than ordinary chanting of republican songs, a display of the tri-coloured flag on the tops of the churches in the town, and by a party of officers going on shore

shore to the play. Thus, it seems, liberty wants perpetual refuscitation, while the adoration, or even the confession, of a Deity, is left to the unassisted operations of the human mind. From the pompous flimsy reports and orations on this subject made in the convention; from the *condescension* of Robespierre, who *decreed* the existence of a Deity, to the hardy denial of Dupont, who proclaimed himself an atheist; must I deduce all I know of the present state of religion in France. It is, however, worthy of remark, that a book, intitled "The Republican Catechism," which is in universal circulation, and expressly composed for the instruction of the youth of the community, does not once acknowledge, or even hint at, the being of a God; and the public instructor of the prison-ship assured me, that, although the minds of men be now somewhat returning to their former biases, six months ago an inculcation of this principle, so far from being prescribed by the legislature, would have subjected the teacher to punishment. God forbid! that, on such slender *data* as I profess, I should stigmatize all Frenchmen with the horrid appellation of atheists, or even
suppose

suppose that a belief in revelation is universally subverted : it were almost to affirm that it had never existed. I have, indeed, in many conversations, had the misfortune to hear innumerable blasphemies uttered, and innumerable sarcasms thrown on all worship; but as they have proceeded from none but weak and ignorant men (to the honour of my friend the schoolmaster, he always reprobated them) who possibly take this method of recommending their republican zeal; I shall be very cautious, until able to acquire better information, of asserting what are the general sentiments of the French on this head. Whenever the subject is started, the people, among whom I am condemned to live, fasten immediately upon some of the monstrous absurdities of the Romish church, and the impositions of the priesthood, which in truth offer but too secure a hold for derision and contempt. This trick, of attempting to confound the impositions of knaves, and the reveries of fools, with the spirit of Christianity, is too stale and despicable to deserve confutation. I will not even quote the noble and decisive simile of Hamlet, which seems to

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have

have been conceived on purpose to expose it. Tremble not, therefore, for the faith of your friend, from such puny opponents. He will not yield his assent to new systems, until he has, at least, scrutinized and weighed their effects upon those who inculcate and practise them; and if, upon this test, he finds the professors of these doctrines to be men of profligate manners and corrupted sentiments, with the words truth, honour, humanity, and generosity in their mouths, while they are estranged from their hearts, you will not suppose his danger of conversion to be imminent.

And now to terminate this long desultory epistle, which I have written by snatches, when, and how, and as, I could.—Suffer me, however, before we part, to say a word or two of the political changes which I perceive to be working. My residence among the French is not yet six weeks old; and in this short space of time, wonderful has been the alteration of opinion. When we were taken, I was perpetually stunned with the exclamations of “*Vive la Montagne! Vivent les Jacobins!*” But suddenly,

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La Montagne is become the theme of execration, and the Jacobin club is cashiered. I gained a confirmation of these events oddly enough. I had observed the disuse of these ridiculous cries for some days, and had overheard a conversation which had raised my suspicions. To ascertain their justness, I bade one of the boys call out as before. "Ah!" said he, "that is forbidden; *à présent il faut crier, au diable la Montagne! A bas les Jacobins!*" which he immediately ran along the deck exclaiming. The memory of Robespierre they have uniformly affected to hold in abhorrence; but if I may trust to a hint, which was imparted to me on board the prison-ship, very different was once the tone of Captain Le Franq, and all his officers. They now load the character of this extraordinary man, before whom, not six months since, they prostrated themselves like reptiles, with all the assassinations and misery which have overspread France during the last two years. To him alone, it seems, every crime which stains the national character is imputable. At present I will not venture any opinion; but when I get on shore, I shall direct my enquiries to

develope the character of this celebrated demagogue.

The fleet is preparing to sail; and as all the line-of-battle ships are known either to the Admiral, his two young gentlemen, or myself, I shall be enabled, by observing which sail, and which do not, to note down exactly its strength, provided we be not gone before it. But tomorrow we are assured we are to be landed.
——Adieu.

LETTER

L E T T E R V.

La Normandie, prison-ship,
Brest-Water, 5th Feb. 1795.

COULD what I write reach you in due course, my present place of date might surprize you, after the assurances which my last held out of going forthwith to Quimper. Admiral Bligh has been meanly and cruelly treated: their violated promises to me are of less consequence.

On the day after I last wrote to you, matters respecting our departure seemed to be drawing to a favourable conclusion. An officer from Admiral Villaret waited on Admiral Bligh, to beg his acceptance of a loan of one thousand livres in paper (offering at the same time as many more as might be wished) and to assure him, that we were to be landed on the following day. The livres were accepted; and, as we now deemed our departure certain, we put ourselves, at day-light next morning, in a state of preparation for our removal. Removed, in-

deed, we were, not to Quimper, but to this horrid receptacle, where we have been closely immured ever since, suffering every mental punishment which low-minded rancour and brutal ignorance could inflict; and every physical hardship which this rigorous winter, and occasional deficiencies of food, could produce. I have not seen a fire during the whole month of January; and on Christmas-day I was one of *fifteen* English officers, with the Admiral at our head, whose dinner consisted of *eight* very small mutton-chops, and a plate of potatoes. This last circumstance, exciting both hunger and indignation (as we knew that a *traitement* was paid for us by the government, and as we had lately from our encreased number lived by ourselves) we determined not to bear it without remonstrance, especially as for several succeeding days our treatment had been little better; and I was delegated to inform the officers of the ship, that if they should not use us hereafter more liberally, we would write a complaint against them to Admiral Villaret. This produced a good effect; and henceforth we were more amply supplied. In justice to Monsieur Villaret, I must observe

observe to you, that his character is eminent for honour and justice; and in spite of appearances against him at first, on our not being sent to Quimper, we now know, that had his ability been equal to his disposition, Admiral Bligh would not be here. Of Le Franq I cannot speak in similar terms. He exhibited a mean exultation at our disappointment, not altogether unaccompanied with insult; and his whole behaviour, for some time before we left him, had entirely altered our first impression of him.

Our detention has, however, been productive of a very desirable event to the Admiral. In consequence of a late decree of the convention, directing that all women and children who had been captured shall be liberated, and permitted to return home, he was enabled to send away his son, under the auspices of Lady Anne Fitzroy, who had been a prisoner for many months at Quimper.

The fleet sailed from the outer road on the 30th of December, consisting of the following ships, under the command of Vice-Admiral Villaret, who was assisted by the Admirals Bouvet, Vanstabelle, Nieully, and Re-

naudin, and controlled by several representatives.

	Guns,		Guns,
La Montagne, - -	120	Le Jean Bart, - -	74
Le Majestueux - -	110	La Convention, -	74
Le Terrible, - -	110	La Revolution, -	74
Le Revolutionnaire, -	110	Le Scipion, - -	74
Le Neuf Thermidor *,	84	Le Nestor, - -	74
L'Indomptable, - -	84	Le Mutius Scævola, -	74
Le Tigre, - -	74	Les Droits de l'Homme	74
Le Montagnard, - -	74	Le 31 de Mai, - -	74
Le Tourville, - -	74	Le Neptune, - -	74
Le Pelletier, - -	74	L'Eole, - -	74
L'Acquilon, - -	74	L'Entreprenant, -	74
Le Temeraire, - -	74	Le Trajan, - -	74
Le Zelè, - -	74	Le Patriote, - -	74
L'Audacieux, - -	74	Le Gasparin, - -	74
Le Marat, - -	74	Le Superbe, - -	74
Le Tirannicide, - -	74	Le Redoutable, -	74
Le Jemappe, - -	74	Le Fougueux, - -	74

And the Alexander, of 74 guns, with at least a dozen frigates, and several corvettes.

Le Republicain, of 110 guns, was intended to constitute a part of the fleet; but on the night of the 24th of December she broke from

* Formerly Le Jacobin, the ship supposed to be sunk on the first of June.

her

her anchors, was driven on a rock, and bulged, in a manner which does very little credit to French seamanship. Here she lay until the 9th of January, when her remains were burned, her main-mast and mizen-mast being then standing, and her main-top-fail yard across.

When the fleet sailed, the wind was nearly at E. and it continued to blow here between the points of N. E. and E. S. E. until the evening of Sunday the 25th of January, when it shifted to South, and next day blew fresh at S. W. On Thursday the 29th of January it returned to S. E. and continued in the Eastern quarter until the evening of the 31st, when it backed to S. W.

On the 12th of January Le Redoutable singly came back into port; on the 28th seven sail more of two-deckers returned, having parted three days before in a fog from the body of the fleet, which, to the number of twenty sail, arrived on the second and third of this month, and two others have got into l'Orient: *no less than the following five having either foundered, or been purposely run on shore, to prevent their sinking.*

Le

		Guns.
Le Scipion,	-	74
Le Superbe,	-	74
Le Neuf Thermidor,	-	84
Le Temeraire,	-	74
Le Neptune,	-	74

The condition even of those which have escaped, is deplorable: among others Le Majestueux had four pumps going when she entered the port. Two days ago I held a long conversation with the Captain of Le Jean Bart, who execrated the planners of this destructive expedition to their navy. He assured me, that it had been remonstrated against in the strongest terms by the naval officers, and its pernicious consequences foretold; but the orders from Paris were positive. The fleet cruized in three divisions, the easternmost of which kept but just outside of Scilly and Ushant; and the westernmost was once driven as far as 18° W. in the latitude of 45° ; the central division occupied the intermediate space. I learned these particulars from some masters of English merchantmen who were taken, and have been sent to this prison. A more effectual plan to in-

interrupt

interrupt our commerce could not have been devised. Of its practicability, had I not lived to see it executed, I should at least have doubted; but this is an age of political phænomena on the water, as well as the land. Between fifty and sixty prizes were captured by this fleet, among which was a transport bound from Ireland to Bristol, having on board 120 soldiers of a new-raised regiment, who are now confined here, and do so little credit, by their appearance, to British troops, that I have more than once blushed, when they have been pointed at by the French; and I have been asked with a sneer, "Are these the men who are to march to Paris?" In the list of prizes were also six or seven of the homeward-bound Oporto fleet, all of which they sunk, with their cargoes; deeming, I presume, that honest beverage (to use the words of one of their authors) "a heavy stupifying liquor, fit to be drunk by Englishmen only."

Cut off as I am from all communication with English politics, I shall not presume to guess at the causes which have retained our fleet in harbour.

bour. But some of those which have not sustained it, I shall venture to state. It was not the weather, for that was uninterruptedly fair until the 25th of January. It was not the wind, for that during the same period was always easterly, here at least, and our distance from Plymouth is barely 45 leagues. It was not a want of information, for (to my knowledge) exclusive of other channels, two English gentlemen, who escaped from this place in a boat at least as early as the 8th of January, must have arrived in England by the 12th or 13th. The rigid caution observed by the French, in not hazarding engagements at sea, is notorious. In the present instance it has been exchanged for a hardy audacity. They now boast that they have challenged us to the lifts, which we have not dared to enter against them; but, during the time of their fleet being out, I have seen them tremble at the probability of such an event. Had the month of January been as tempestuous as it commonly is in this climate, our assistance would hardly have been required to destroy their leaky and crazy ships,

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in want of naval stores and able seamen. One hard gale of wind at S. S. W. would have cost them at least a dozen sail of the line.

What then shall we say? "There is," my friend, "a tide in the affairs" of nations, as well as of men: the page of history every where records it. Hannibal, after the battle of Cannæ, instead of marching to Rome, turned aside to Capua; — from that moment the Carthaginian fortune ebbed, never to flow again. The series of rapid conquests, which distinguished the brilliant campaign of 1776, was finished, not by taking Philadelphia, dispersing the Congress, and breaking up the new government, but by occupying winter cantonments in Jersey, where our victorious army was beaten in detail; — and America was lost. The allies, after the surrender of Valenciennes, divided their forces; — and since that fatal separation how has their career of conquest been turned into retreat, marked only by overthrow, consternation and despair!

On the 31st of December, the Admiral was again reduced to my society, and that of his youngsters, all the other officers of the Alexander

ander being sent on shore to the Château, where, according to accounts which I have received from them, by some letters privately conveyed to me, they are treated in a manner shocking to humanity.—But I must be contented with telling you my own story.

On their departure we who were left were again taken into the mess of the officers of the ship. The military part of this assembly are a set of worthless wretches; but two of those who fill civil posts are men of honourable characters, ever ready to pity our situation, and to give us every reasonable degree of intelligence of the state of the country, and what is going on; to which *I* add the advantage of reading daily some of the Paris news-papers, which are brought on board.

Through these channels I draw not only abundant matter for reflection, but frequently obtain diversion. “Moderation, and down with the Terrorists!” resound, I believe, from one end to the other of the republic. It is in all respects our interest to wish that such sentiments may be more than nominal. It is certain that a general dismissal of the creatures
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of Robespierre is taking place. The indiscriminate advancement of unqualified candidates to offices of trust and dignity, which to court popular applause universally prevailed until lately, furnishes to those, who are not over-friendly to a democratic cause, an inexhaustible fund of merriment and ridicule. Among others who have just experienced the instability of honours is Tribout, who commanded the troops at Brest. This man, from beating a drum, and officiating as a regimental barber, under the old government, had been advanced by the revolution to the dignity of a drum-major, whence, by an easy gradation, he at once rose to the rank of a general officer, for intrepidity displayed in a battle on the frontiers. His elevation, however, only exposed him to derision in the district wherein he was delegated to command. Like the unfortunate cat, who at the request of her master was metamorphosed by Jupiter into a young woman, and who still retained her feline appetites, some unlucky trait, it seems, was for ever occurring in this poor man's behaviour, to remind the spectators of his earlier professions. When he was on the
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the parade he had all the flourishes of the drum-major, and at table all the busy curiosity and oily language of the *friseur*. After exciting universal contempt against himself and his employers, during the period of his command here, he has been suddenly stripped of his full-blown honours, and condemned to vegetate hereafter on a small pension, which has been assigned to him ; with permission, however, to retain the title of *General Tribout*.

The 21st of January was the anniversary of the execution of Louis XVI. an event which will be annually commemorated by very different ceremonies and emotions from what distinguished this day, when the political phrenzy that now agitates Frenchmen shall be evaporated. A play analagous to the occasion was performed at the theatre, *gratis* ; the towers and forts on shore, and all the ships in the harbour, displayed their colours ; and lastly, to prove their civism, the *keepers* of this dungeon put on their best clothes, and provided the best dinner I have seen since I have been taken. I ate of it, but not without a sigh for the cause which gave birth to this savage exultation over
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the manes of a mild and generous, though irresolute, monarch. And even here I feel pleasure in saying, all sensations of pity are not extinguished, all distinctions which should regulate the administration of justice are not obliterated. This very day a Frenchman whispered in my ear, "His death (the king's) in spite of the veil which the convention threw over the real sentiments of the people, struck the hearts of the majority of Frenchmen with amazement and horror." Of the memory of the queen he spoke less affectionately. He recounted to me some of the extravagant tales, which have been so industriously propagated against her; but in defiance of them, what unprejudiced mind can hesitate to pronounce, that the cruel and ignominious rigour of her confinement; the brutal and unmanly spirit that dictated the charges upon which she was tried; and the mockery of all justice with which she was prosecuted; joined to the violent death inflicted upon this unhappy princess (against whom report has been so loud, and proof so feeble) have fixed upon the annals of the revolution a stain, which will be indelible, while

sentiments of tenderness and generosity towards women, and principles of equity towards the accused, are cherished in the human breast?

The news of the entire conquest of Holland has caused great rejoicings. But when the wildness of joy and congratulation had subsided, what think you was the first reflection which I heard on the subject?—A calculation of the advantages which will accrue to their marine. By this acquisition, they hope to be enabled to dispute the empire of the sea with England. It is publicly reported, that a negotiation for peace with Prussia is proceeding, and will be speedily completed; but to this I only oppose my silent unbelief.

We often hear of Charette; but the accounts are so extravagant and contradictory, that I know not what to think. About two months ago I was persuaded, from all I read in the newspapers, and from what I was every day told, that he had either surrendered, and sworn fealty to the republic, or was about to do so; but as the most furious republicans among my present associates have lately been silent about him, and

answer with reluctance to my questions on the subject, I can only guess, from their reserve, that all is not agreeable to their wishes, and consequently that he is still the rallying point of royalism.

I have sometimes my doubts whether it be not their intention to continue us where we are altogether, and that the promise of being sent to Quimper is as delusive as every other part of their conduct; but these are only the suggestions of spleen, on recollecting the frequency of our disappointments; for an order is absolutely received on board, to send us hence to a small armed brig, which is to take some coasters under her convoy to Quimper, as soon as the wind shifts to the N. W. In her, it seems, and not according to the first intention of sending us by land, are we to be conveyed to our place of destination. — There! — but hang gloomy anticipations! the thought alone of being on shore, and able to warm myself by exercise, must give it a decided preference to a prison-ship, in which, during this bitter season, we have been cooped up, and frozen both in soul and body. You would have

laughed to see the contrivances we have had recourse to, to keep up a little warmth, and restore circulation to our benumbed extremities. The Admiral twice wrote to the representatives, for permission to walk on shore with the officers of the ship; but of his first letter no notice was taken; and to his second only a verbal answer, that "his request could not be granted," was returned.—Adieu.

LETTER

L E T T E R VI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Quimper, Bretagne,
18th Feb. 1795.

LUCKY! lucky dog! you will exclaim, when you read the word Quimper at the head of this letter; and are farther told, that I am comfortably lodged, and seated at an English table. This welcome intelligence will, I think, soon reach you through a channel by which I shall venture to send you a packet.

We arrived here yesterday: Admiral Bligh brought with him a letter from an English lady, who accompanied Lady Anne Fitzroy, to Mademoiselle Brimaudiere, a native and inhabitant of the town; and, on presenting it, was obligingly told by her, that she had already received notice to prepare for him, from a gentleman at l'Orient, whose son-in-law, the captain of the America, was a prisoner in England; and that if he pleased to accept of such accommodations as her house, which was a hired one, afforded, they were at his service. This cour-

teous offer, you may be sure, was immediately closed with, and we took possession of our new apartments. Here we were also welcomed by two of our countrymen, whom we found to be inmates of our house—Lieutenant Robinson, late of the Thames frigate, and Mr. Burley, of the same ship. With these gentlemen we have formed a mess. The good lady of the house condescends to market for us; our servants, assisted by the maid of the house, officiate as cooks; and we live already so much more comfortably than I ever expected to do during my captivity, that I cannot describe to you the joyful sensations I have experienced on this change.

We quitted the prison-ship on the 14th instant, to our unspeakable satisfaction. From our military acquaintances there we parted without an adieu, from our civil ones not without sentiments of esteem. For the last nine days before our departure we had separated from their mess, and lived entirely by ourselves, owing to the following circumstance:—On some English prisoners being brought on board, one of the officers of the ship, who is a Provençal, and

and speaks so indistinctly; that his own countrymen cannot, without difficulty, understand him, desired one of our young midshipmen to interpret for him, which request he would readily have complied with, as he had often done before, had he comprehended it; but not possessing the gift of understanding inarticulate sounds, he turned round to his companion, and said, "Monſieur ——— asks me some question, but "as usual I don't know what it was." The other not hearing himself called upon, and not supposing the matter to be very important, smiled, and both of them, in all the gaiety and thoughtlessness of fourteen, walked away. For this enormous offence they were immediately sent for into the cabin, and, without being suffered to urge a syllable in explanation, were told, that they were not any longer to consider themselves as entitled to eat at the table of the officers. The young gentlemen communicated this to me, and I lost no time in informing the Admiral of it; who finding, on examination, that they had not committed an intentional incivility, desired me to explain the business, and to assure Monſieur ——— that the apparent

flight had proceeded from misapprehension. This I attempted to do, and in return for it was honoured with several scandalous appellations, as an instigator and abettor of the offenders, although it happened that I had not been present when the crime was committed. Our two friends in the civil department also attempted to interfere in their favour, but were silenced by authority, the insult being deemed of a public nature, and striking at the dignity of the republic. Admiral Bligh now declared, that if the young gentlemen were to be thus driven from the mess, he and I should look upon ourselves as included in the expulsion. This they would willingly have prevented, and wished to draw a line of distinction; but the Admiral's manly resolution cut short debate, and, on their refusing to yield the point, he and I directly quitted them with contempt; and with two spoons belonging to our servants, and a pocket-knife each, which constituted our whole stock of utensils, we set up our mess forthwith, demanding our rations, but refusing to receive any more *traitement*. Now was to be seen, for the first time, in a civilized enemy's country, a British Admiral,

Admiral, whose seat was a trunk, and whose table was a trunk, eating a salt herring laid on a scrap of paper, from want of a plate; or supping at the same board, with a candle stuck in an ink-horn, on a second herring; or dipping his spoon in a tub that held our soup, which was part of that made for the ship's company, sometimes of beef, and sometimes of horse-beans and oil. Breakfast, however, by having a little tea and brown sugar of our own, with the addition of some salt butter, which we had procured from the shore for our servants, was a repast of real luxury. This miserable fare, and want of common necessities, lasted but two days, when we got leave to employ the cook to market for us, and dress our provisions. It brought me, however, perfectly acquainted with the extent of the French allowance, and likewise with the prices of different commodities on shore, which we found enormously high, and every day rising. To console us, however, the value of gold, in exchange for *assignats*, more than kept pace in its increase.—Here I take my leave of the good ship *La Normandie*, and her worthy inmates, in full trust that, in the course

course of our future correspondence, neither her name, nor theirs, will ever again pollute my paper!

My observations since I left Brest could not be numerous; but, as I feel an interest in them, they shall not be suppressed.

The little vessel which conveyed us hither was extremely inconvenient, and ill-fitted for the purpose; but her commander, Monsieur Conseil, and his officers, treated us with great civility and regard. She had been a Jersey privateer, and retains her English name, the *Betsy*. About noon, on the day before yesterday, we anchored just within the mouth of the river that leads to Quimper, within twenty yards of the shore. After so long a residence on ship-board, amidst men of coarse and ferocious manners, I could not withdraw my eyes from the scene before me. It was a clear frosty day, but the deep snow of the winter had been melted by intervening thaws, and the fields bore that fresh and verdant hue, which is so re-animating to the human heart. The river was of a moderate breadth, and on each side stood a parish-church, surrounded by a few scattering

scattering houses. Notwithstanding the keenness of the weather, the peasantry were dancing in circles in the open air. The small space which I could see bore no trace of distress or devastation; and so transported was I with the appearance of all around me, heightened by a recollection of the past, that I was almost ready, with the shipwrecked philosopher of antiquity, to cry out to my companions, "Courage, my friends! from these marks I know we are thrown among civilized beings!"

Our commander, who was of a pleasant unsuspicious temper, begged that the Admiral would defer going up to Quimper until the next morning, and offered, if we pleased, to accompany us on shore after dinner for a walk. This was a welcome invitation, and eagerly embraced. About two o'clock we landed with our conductor, and set out for a large handsome looking house, the *château* of the Marquis de Kersalaun, about a mile off, which we had seen in the morning, in running along-shore, before we entered the river. We passed through thick woods, and when we reached the *château* found there an engineer, who is stationed on the coast,

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in the service of the republic, and is a friend of the Marquis. This gentleman is permitted to reside here, and also two of the Marquis's old female servants. He received us very politely, and led us up large stone staircases, through various apartments lined with old tapestry, and half illumined "by rich windows, which almost exclude the light." He shewed us also a small chapel within the house, which, though commonly kept shut up, bears marks of the fury of the times. The *château* is long and low, with a turret, which resembles a pigeon-house, on its centre, and has a fine old avenue leading up to it from the sea-side. Before we left the house, the gentleman presented to us some excellent cyder, and lamented, with evident signs of mortification, that he possessed not a drop of either wine or brandy. From the house he took us into two large walled gardens, forming oblong squares. In the disposition of these, and the other grounds surrounding the house, no mark of taste appears, but they exhibit the hand of wealth and labour. In the centre of the largest garden stands a circular basin or fountain of considerable size, "which once," said our civil
and

and sensible conductor, "was thought an embellishment to the *château*. Here," continued he, "ran the leaden pipes which supplied it, and here were fixed the plates of iron which secured it; but, as you see, all the former are dug up, and cast into bullets, and all the latter have been torn off in wantonness. Mark too the breaches in that wall, through which the cattle and pigs enter; and how the *espaliers* are either broken, or rooted up. No means to prevent these depredations are left in my power. The *château* was lately converted into a temporary prison, to contain a party of Englishmen, who, under the guard of a detachment of soldiers, were sent to cut down the Marquis's woods, for the use of the republic. I have less cause of complaint against the English than against their guards, who were to the last degree insolent and destructive. Twice did they set fire to the house by their carelessness"—(we had seen the marks on the floors and tapestry)—"I complained and remonstrated against them, in vain, to our municipality: I obtained no redress. But this evil was temporary. The fatal
"change

“ change which has taken place in our manners,
“ and the wide-extended spirit of rapine, which
“ it has introduced, has infected our peasantry.
“ The farmers and tenants of the Marquis,
“ who formerly pressed forward to serve him
“ (for he was a kind and generous landlord) are
“ now eager to promote the devastation, and
“ to share in his spoils. This and this,” (point-
ing to different marks of fury and ravage)
“ have they committed.”—As we went home-
ward he made us observe, that all the trees of
the avenue were marked, for the use of the re-
public; “ and,” added he, “ are all to be cut
“ down soon, with the rest of the wood on the
“ estate, in order to be sent to Brest, the whole
“ being in a state of requisition.” I saw some
large groupes of stately firs, many of which were
felled and squared on the spot. I put some
questions to him about the Marquis and his
fortune. “ He is,” said he, “ between eighty-
“ one and eighty-two years old, and is now at
“ Paris, where he is obliged to reside, and, in
“ return for stripping him of his estate, he has
“ been *promised* a pension. Perhaps, as matters
“ are certainly softening among us, he may be
“ enabled

“ enabled to make better terms. It is not pre-
“ tended that he has committed any crime; but
“ he suffers for those of his two sons, who have
“ emigrated; and, at the age of fourscore years,
“ he was thought too dangerous a person to be
“ permitted to dwell on his hereditary estate,
“ where he offered to remain tranquil, and sub-
“ missive to the ruling powers. He was for-
“ merly *Doyen* of the States of Bretagne. In a
“ letter, which he lately wrote to a friend, he
“ states himself to be in good health, and to have
“ borne the excessive cold of the winter very
“ well; but complains that wood was 400
“ livres a cord, and meat three livres a pound.
“ The value of his estate was between sixty and
“ seventy thousand livres *per annum*; but of
“ this to the amount of not more than twelve
“ thousand lies contiguous to the house. The
“ timber, however, on this latter part was so
“ valuable, as to be reckoned at twice the
“ worth of the land.”—It appeared to me, in-
deed, to be very thickly wooded.

We bade adieu to our obliging informer, and
returned towards our ship, by a different way
from that which we had come. On this road I
observed

observed three or four stone crosses, broken and thrown down. When we reached the landing-place, the peasants were again dancing, with some foldiers, sailors, and fishermen. We went close to look at them, and, except from one lady, who told us, in broken French, she did not like the English, met with neither rudeness or insult. The figure of their dance was very simple, consisting only of describing a circle, through various parts of which, with joined hands, they threaded from time to time; and notwithstanding their wooden shoes, I thought they executed it with more spirit and less awkwardness than our clowns generally perform. None of the women were handsome, but they had all healthy cheerful countenances, and were coarsely but cleanly dressed; their long white caps, which form a sort of hood behind, giving to the younger ones a very sober and matron-like appearance. A publick-house, which the dancers of both sexes frequently visited, was close by, where cyder and a small acid red wine were retailed. These people conversed entirely in the Breton language, the sound of which, had I not forcibly felt from other circumstances

Cumstances where I was, would have made me swear that I was in Wales. I found, upon trial, that not one in ten of the peasants could speak French, or even understood it when spoken to them. I asked if the gaiety which I saw was continual, or only occasional; and was told, that this was the week of the *carnival*, a period of festivity, which the Bretons of all ranks, notwithstanding the austerity of the times, have never failed to celebrate in revelry and dissipation.

I went into several houses. They form a medium between the neatness of an English, and the filthiness of an Irish, cottage; they are dark and gloomy like the latter, but the walls are strongly built of stone, the roofs well thatched, and none of them are without a chimney. There was a moderate quantity of necessary household utensils in all, and a good fire burning, over which, in most of them, hung large pots boiling. Here was no indication of want or distress. "Destruction to the châteaux, peace to the cottages," is an aphorism, which has been often repeated in the convention, to instigate the poor to plunder the rich.

H

The

The church-door being open, I walked in, and found it converted into a barrack for the soldiers belonging to a small fort which stands at a little distance. There was a large fire burning in it, and it was filled by the bedding and other effects of the men; but I observed that the altar was entire. A serjeant, seeing me regard it with attention, whispered me, that it owed its preservation to him: a piece of intelligence of which I could not doubt the truth, when he carried me into a little vestry, which he unlocked with a key that he took from his pocket. There he showed me the images of our Saviour and the Virgin, which were here deposited uninjured. I commended the zeal of this honest halberdier, and we parted good friends, it being time to return on board.

Next morning after breakfast we were conveyed hither, in one of the ship's boats. The distance is about three leagues; and a cold easterly wind blowing strongly against us, made the passage tedious and disagreeable. The river winds very much, and gradually narrows, until it becomes contracted at Quimper to a fresh-water brook, deep enough, however, to permit vessels,

vessels, which do not draw more than eleven feet, to reach the town at high water. Its banks are highly picturesque, very woody, and rather wild and bold than fertile. They are besides adorned by many gentlemen's houses, on a smaller scale than the Marquis de Kerfalaun's *château*, but built in the same taste, and surrounded by plantations of fir-trees. Like the *château* too, they all bear marks of the unhappy state of the country, the windows being broken, the garden-walls and fences destroyed, and an air of desolation spread around them.

About one o'clock we reached Quimper, and were taken to the house of the commissary of prisoners, whose reception of us did not forebode the pleasing consequences which followed; for this man of power, when acquainted with our names and ranks, neither did us the honour to return our salute of the hat, or to ask us to sit down. However, after having given a receipt for us to the captain of the vessel, he condescended to conduct us in person to the house of Mademoiselle B—— (to whom he is related) whose polite and obliging reception of us, soon caused us to forget the republican manners of *Citizen Precini*.

We have found here abundance of our countrymen, this town being the principal *dépôt* of prisoners of war in the Western departments. In this unfortunate list are Captain Kittoe, of l'Espion sloop of war, and his two lieutenants; Colonel Caldwell, who is a native of Ireland, and in the Portugueze service; with many other officers and gentlemen, and several hundred British seamen.

LETTER

L E T T E R VII.

Quimper, 2d March, 1795.

ALTHOUGH placed in a part of France very remote from the capital, and unfrequented by travellers, I find in all I hear and see abundant matter of wonder and reflection; and as I advance in my enquiries, the scene continues to open upon me. To witness the meridian blaze of the revolutionary government, I am arrived six months too late; its disastrous lustre is eclipsed. When I testify emotions of astonishment, I am always cut short by the exclamation of, "Ah! if you had been here in the reign of Robespierre, or even during the first three months after his death!"

I am not upon any parole, either written or verbal, but I am *cautionné*, that is, the lady of the house is bound for my appearance at all times, in the sum of 3000 livres. Upon this consideration I have leave to go into all parts of the town, and have ventured to deviate, in

every direction, into the surrounding country, to the distance of two or three miles, without having hitherto met with interruption.

Nothing could happen more fortunately than our coming here at the beginning of the carnival-week, during which parties meet every night at each other's houses. The evening of our arrival the meeting was held at Mademoiselle Brimaudiere's, and was attended by all her friends and acquaintances, who, as she is a woman well born and connected, are of the better order, though, as I found in the sequel, of very opposite political opinions. Formerly these assemblies were closed by sumptuous suppers; but in the present poverty of the times, they meet only to play at *passé-dix*. Into this circle I was introduced, and found the greater part of it composed of well-dressed people of both sexes, who surrounded a large table, on which the dice were rolling, and the spirit of betting as keen as it could have been at any former period; handfuls of *assignats* shifting their owners every moment; and even children, of not more than seven or eight years old, were encouraged to stand by, and receive lessons in this instructive

tive seminary :—" *Ma mere! dix sols pour !—Ma tante! quinze sols contre !*" resounded from infant mouths on every side. Among the women were several whom I thought very agreeable in person, particularly Mademoiselle Kérvélligan, and la Marquise de Ploeuc. The latter is extremely elegant in her manners, but beams "with faded splendor." I could not bear to hear the boorish and disgusting title of "*Citoyenne*" applied to a fashionable woman; and therefore, whenever I addressed myself to the marchioness, I called her "*Madame la Marquise*," and the rest of the company *Mademoiselle*, or *Monsieur*. Indeed to this I had acquired a sort of right, by being myself honoured with the appellation of "*Monsieur le Major*," when I was invited to play, which I at once accepted, and formed one of the circle. These good old-fashioned courtesies also fell occasionally from the rest of the company; but I observed that they were spoken in a low voice, and not without trepidation: they are, however, I am assured, fast returning into vogue.

At a play-table the common centre of union must be the stake, and to that I found here, as

elsewhere, all cares anxiously directed; but, during some short cessations of the game, I remarked that the company divided into knots, which seemed jealous of each other. The operation of a more powerful passion being suspended, their political prejudices were now revived. I was among royalists, federalists, and fierce republicans one and indivisible. The fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters of emigrants, for whose desertion they had been punished, collected with *bons citoyens*, and *enragés*. Of these last, from not mixing in their groupe, I can say nothing, except that the dress of some of them was affectedly mean, and their conversation marked by a boisterous and rude familiarity, which I knew before were leading characteristics of their party. If I find myself compelled by necessity to cultivate an acquaintance with any of this faction, while I remain at Quimper, I hope I shall not be constrained to extend to them an observation, which I was forced to pass upon their brethren on ship-board—that I never knew one man, professing to be a fierce and flaming republican, who possessed either the manners which should distinguish

guish a gentleman (setting aside the forms of courtesy) or that common share of probity, which is required to keep the links of society together.

In the little knot of royalists to which, you may suppose, I attached myself, I was not worse received for being an Englishman. Indeed they spoke quite undisguisedly before me, but it was in whispers. A young lady, on seeing me gaze with attention upon one of the republican phalanx, who (like all his colleagues) had worn his hat during the evening, asked me, which I liked best, the tri-coloured cockade I was surveying, or the "*cocarde blanche*?" "The cockade of honour, to be sure," I answered,—“Softly, softly, for God’s sake!” said she, “or we shall be overheard and undone.”

One of the company, Monsieur Kérvélligan, is a member of the convention, and appeared to me, both on this occasion and since, to be a manly dignified character. I conversed a little with him on indifferent subjects, as he only played occasionally. He is reputed to possess a penetrating mind; and it is certain that he very early discovered the views of Robespierre,
and

and described them faithfully to his friends here. Monsieur Kérvélligan was proscribed, with many other deputies, on the 31st of May, when the Brissotine party was overthrown, and compelled to flee before that of the Mountain. With some of his colleagues, he effected his escape into Normandy, and thence into the wildest part of this neighbourhood, where he took refuge among the peasants, by whom he was known and beloved. These poor people were well aware, that by betraying him they might make their fortunes; but they were too simple and honest to violate the duty of hospitality. He frequently ventured to come into town in disguise, and has often heard himself proclaimed a traitor, and a reward offered to whoever would bring him in, alive or dead, to the municipality. Soon after the execution of Robespierre, he emerged from his retreat, and by a late decree of the convention, is recalled, with others, to his seat in their body; and intends to set out to Paris very soon, to resume his delegation. Monsieur Kérvélligan voted against the murder of his sovereign; and has told his friends here, that in going, on the day of the question being put to the vote, to the hall

hall of the convention, he and many other members were several times stopped, and surrounded by bodies of the lowest class of the people, who clapped pistols to their heads, threatened them, and swore they would sacrifice them on their return, if they did not vote for the death of their sovereign.

During the carnival-week there was a second party, similar to the first, at our house: and, under the auspices of our good hostess, I went also to two others, the last of which, on *Sunday* evening, was at Monsieur Kérvélligan's, where the same entertainment was provided, and pursued with the same avidity. Mademoiselle Kérvélligan I have already mentioned as a handsome young woman; and her mother, Madame Kérvélligan, is also very agreeable.

At one of these routs I saw a specimen of genuine democratic manners, which all who aim to become great men in the state affect to imitate. The commissary of prisoners, a man allied to nobility, liberally educated, and once an Abbé, bolted into the room where the company were assembled, humming the *Carmagnole*, with his hat on, which was adorned with a red, a
white,

white, and a blue feather, and his hands stuck in his breeches, *not packets*. In this attitude he stood all the evening, and thrusting himself among the ladies, had the impudence to enter into familiar conversation with the Marchioness de Ploëuc, and other women of rank and delicacy, with all the airs which conscious superiority of power can instil into a reptile. This brutal manner of mingling in society, and addressing women, has become, since the revolution, the *ton* of republican coxcombs, and during the reign of Robespierre set decorum and the restraints of civilized life at defiance. It is now on the decline, except with those who still court the applause of the dregs of that faction. A courtier of Versailles at his toilet, surrounded by paints, patches, and perfumery, was, in the eye of reason, a ridiculous and contemptible animal; but the most effeminate effenced *marquis*, that ever consulted a looking-glass, was surely preferable to this indecent blockhead,

In frequenting these little circles, I see many victims of the tyranny of the government, and hear such anecdotes of it related, as make me shudder. The marchioness has been stripped
of

of two estates, and the best house in this town, which is converted into a prison. Two ladies, who reside in our house, are but just liberated from a close confinement, under which, with many more of their sex, they languished for fourteen months. During their imprisonment, in return for the sequestration of their property, they were allowed *twenty sols* a day, out of which they were compelled to pay two for *house-rent*. Monsieur Brimaudiere, brother of the lady of this house, was *capitaine des gens d'armes* of this district, a post of trust and power. When the party of Brissot fell, he was seized, sent to Paris, and imprisoned for fifteen months in the *Conciergerie*. During the whole of his confinement he was kept in the same room, and saw, during that period, 167 persons go out of it to the guillotine, every day expecting himself to be added to the number. His ~~last~~ was close at hand when Robespierre was overturned, and soon after the death of the tyrant he was liberated, and sent back hither, to resume his former situation, which he now fills. He describes almost the whole of this assembly of victims to have been so conscious of their innocence, and so reconciled to their lot,

lot, from the daily exits of their friends, that nothing but resignation, indifference, or levity, prevailed throughout the prison, death having ceased, from its familiarity, to terrify. It was customary to warn, on the preceding evening, those prisoners who were to be put on their trial the next day; and by a regulation made among themselves, the party to be tried gave a supper on that night to the whole room; and, if he was spared for the present, and remanded back, he was in return treated with a dinner at their joint expence. "Our dinner entertainments," said my informer, "were few indeed; but Oh! the suppers without end which we partook of!"

All my days, however, have not been passed in going to routs, and listening to details of misery. I have paid a visit to two more members of the convention, and have been *at church*. On the afternoon of the 19th instant, the representatives Guesno and Guermeur arrived here in great state, in a coach which had once belonged to their king, drawn by eight horses, and escorted by forty hussars. "*Voilà l'égalité!*" cried aloud some (I was told) who

saw them enter in this pomp. "And," said my informer, "as if conscious of their power, and the importance of their mission, they neither bowed to the crowd which was assembled to gaze at them, nor spread any lure to engage popular attention, like their brethren who have heretofore been among us." They are both natives of Bretagne, and of good, though not of noble, families. In conjunction with several more deputies, furnished with great powers, they have been delegated by the convention to treat with the inhabitants of La Vendee. Among other avowed objects of their coming hither, is an enquiry into the complaints which have been at different times made by the prisoners of war. Accordingly, two days after, Admiral Bligh, attended by Captain Kittoe and myself, went to the tavern (which once was the *town-palace* of the *bishop* of the diocese) wherein they lodged. We saw them both, and the Admiral, through Captain Kittoe and me as his interpreters, made some representations to them, which, if not quite satisfactorily answered, were at least candidly listened to by Monsieur Guerneur, who was extremely civil; but his colleague

Guesno

Guesno was less friendly, and more elevated, keeping his feat, with his hat on, while we remained in the room, and frequently interrupting our statements. He is said to avow publicly a hatred of our nation, which in this short conference could not be restrained. On the following day I was deputed by the Admiral to wait upon them again, with a letter from him, entreating them to give orders that the other officers of the *Alexander* (who are still closely locked up in the *château* of Brest, suffering misery and imposition) might be liberated, and permitted to join us here. Upon reaching their hotel, I found a crowd of suitors attending at the foot of the stair-case; but the landlady, on seeing me, assured me I should not wait for an audience, as an order had been given by Guerneur to admit at once all English officers who might wish to see him. I profited immediately by this flattering distinction, and marched through two rows of impatient Frenchmen, who were expecting what I had obtained. I found him alone, and was as politely received as on the preceding day. He read my dispatches with deliberation, and in answer desired
me

me to present his compliments to the Admiral, and to assure him, that he would write to his colleagues at Brest, and beg them to comply with the request.

Listen now to a relation, which will in some degree evince to you the infamous height to which imposition, on the ignorance of the people, is practised in this country.—On the 23d of this month an express arrived, in the middle of the night, from the other representatives on mission in this department to those here, which caused great speculation, affording to one part of the inhabitants of the place as much joy and exultation, as to the other it was productive of grief and dismay:—“ *Peace concluded with Gbarette.*” —An event, at once so momentous and desirable, could not pass without celebration. A drummer was sent in the morning into the town, who proclaimed at the corner of every street the important intelligence; and announced, that on the same evening a ball, in honour of it, would be given by the representatives of the people, to which all good republicans were invited to repair. This was a bitter trial to the poor royalists, particu-

larly to those who had been lately liberated from imprisonment. Many of them, rather than go to such a commemoration, chose to submit to the imputation of incivism, and to provoke afresh the arm of power; while others, more compliant, went with aching hearts, to wear the mask of joy on an event, which, if true, quashed their final hope. They all, however, consoled themselves in believing that the information was unfounded. "How," said they, "can we credit any thing which our enemies tell us? How many victories have not we been commanded to celebrate, which were gained only in the fertile inventions of those who fabricated them, and issued the orders! Did they not assure us, that the English fleet was defeated, and almost utterly destroyed, in the engagement of the first of June? Did not —, and —, and —, who were just arrived from Brest, aver with solemnity and oaths, that they had seen, and actually been on board, *three English ships of the line*, in the port of Brest, which were taken in that action? &c. &c."

On these specimens of modern Gallic effrontery

frontery I leave you to your own reflections; and shall only observe, that in a very few days the intelligence about Charette was contradicted, when the royalists, as far as they dared, returned the laugh upon their opponents.

Be this as it may, the ball was well, or at least fully, attended, by generals, colonels, captains, serjeants, corporals, privates, and drummers, with their wives and children; to whom may be added all the butchers, barbers, bakers, tallow-chandlers, servant-maids, and fishwomen in and about Quimper, "whose dress, manners, and vociferation, joined to the offensive smell which proceeded from their persons, "drove me," said the lady from whom I borrow this account, "out of the room in about "half an hour." The maid of our house (who is not of an ignoble stock, although reduced to service) said, she did not deign to dance, as none but *sans-culotte* partners offered themselves. Water was the only refreshment which was served up at this civic feast, and all the fiddlers of the town were put in a state of requisition to play at it. My curiosity was strong;

but it was impossible for an Englishman to be present on such an occasion.

I shall now describe a scene to you, which filled me with very different emotions from this recital.—On leaving the representative, after presenting to him the Admiral's letter, as I was going out of the door, I heard the sound of an organ, proceeding from the cathedral, which was very near the house: I went in, and found mass celebrating in the presence of a congregation consisting chiefly of poor people from the country, with a few of the higher ranks, many more of whom, I was assured, would have been there, could they have believed themselves secure from reproach; but the return of religious worship was yet too young for them to incur the risk—they were all kneeling at their devotions, with great appearance of fervency, while a fine grey-headed respectably looking priest, habited in his pontificals, officiated at the altar. I walked the whole length of the church, through rows of people on their knees, which formerly might have been deemed disrespectful in a heretic;

retic ; but I now met with nothing but courtesy and regard, all seeming conscious that the basis of their persuasion and mine was the same, however we might differ in external forms of adoration. Here I had leisure to contemplate the scene of desolation which this venerable temple presented. At least half the windows of fine old painted glass, "richly dight," were broken ; all the monuments torn down ; and the bones of the dead exposed to view, and commingled with the ruins of their tombs, the names and armorial devices being utterly defaced, and the coffins taken away and converted into bullets. When the service was finished, I went within the railing which incloses the altar, to look at a large picture, representing the Ascension, the figures of which are pierced through in more than twenty places, by sabres and bayonets. An old man, who was kneeling near the rails, observing my attention fixed on the painting, told me, that in the vacant side-compartments once stood two other pictures taken from holy writ ; "But," said he, "they were so cut and hacked, that *we* " were under a necessity of taking them away."

A gentleman, who had joined me in the church, informed me, that the altar and confessionals which I saw had been brought hither from another church; for that those belonging to this had been either burnt, or broken into a thousand pieces: nay, that the figures, with which the altar had been adorned, were carefully separated from it, and triumphantly guillotined in the middle of the great square of the town.

Cold and republican must have been the eye which could survey such scenes of barbarous devastation unmoved, and the heart which could listen to such descriptions of sacrilegious delirium without a sigh!

“ — Oh! but man! proud man!

“ Drefs'd in a little brief authority;

“ ——— like an angry ape,

“ Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,

“ As makes the angels weep.” SHAKESPEARE.

Upon enquiring, I learned that the church had been open for public worship about three weeks, in consequence of a proclamation issued at l'Orient, on the 13th of January, by the representatives Guesno and Guermeur, in which
liberty

liberty of worship is granted to all men in their own way, on "proper terms," but not as a national worship; the republic disavowing a national religion, although tolerating and permitting the free exercise of all, provided the priests who officiate have taken the oaths of allegiance to the state. To this last stipulation the thinness of the weekly congregations is in part attributable, the rigid catholics holding in detestation the priests who have taken the oaths.——Adieu.

LETTER VIII.

Quimper, 4th of April 1795.

I SHOULD not amuse you with a disquisition on the etymology of the name of Quimper, or a research into the date of its foundation, were I capable of furnishing such an entertainment ; but I will tell you all I know of its present state, and of the country contiguous to it.

It is unquestionably a town of considerable antiquity, and when it formed a part of the possessions of the dukes of Bretagne (ere those were annexed to the crown of France, by the marriage of Charles VIII. with Anne of Brittany) sometimes sided, in the wars between the English and the French, with one party, and sometimes with the other. A massy stone wall surrounding the old town, the cathedral, and some other buildings, are believed to be the works of our countrymen.

The town stands in a bottom, encompassed by high hills, and the largest part of it is built on a neck of land formed by the confluence of
two

two rivers. I have often thought it like Plymouth; but it is not so large, although even now extremely populous. Its streets are narrow, winding, and dirty; and their former names have been changed into others of a revolutionary sound, such as the street of Voltaire, the street of Mably, the square of Liberty, &c. &c. The greatest part of the houses are very ancient and mean; but a few are large and stately, with walls whose thickness seems intended for endless duration. On entering them, I was surprized to see the unfinished state of most of the apartments, which are uncieled, the bare beams and cross-pieces presenting themselves to view. I shall be within the bounds of truth when I assert, that of 1500 houses, which are perhaps in the town, not fifty have each a cieled room, and not ten, or even five, have the whole apartments of the ground and first floor cieled. The bottoms of the rooms are as unsightly as the tops, from the gaping chasms of the planks which compose them; and the dirty state in which the floors and furniture are kept, is disgusting. Nevertheless in some respects the interior of these houses deserves regard. The vast

vast mirrors which adorn their best apartments, and the beautiful plate glass of the windows, far exceed what are seen in English houses, except those of the first fashion. The French engravings I prefer to all others, and a few very good ones are still left here, though defaced, by having their dedications to princes, *maréchaux de France*, and other great men, very clumsily erased. Of plate too it is said they formerly displayed sumptuous side-boards; but these have disappeared, having been either buried or committed to the crucible. Indeed it was become necessary to adopt one or other of these measures; for soon after the 10th of August 1792, the democratic lust of destruction rose to such a height, as to order all family distinctions derived from ancestry, and all heraldic emblems whatever, to be erased, not only from the outsides of the houses, but from every article of furniture. Even the armorial bearings engraved on the most trifling toys, a snuff-box, a ring, or a seal, were obliterated; and the post-office took care to detain all letters, of which the seals were impressed with those shocking emblems of aristocracy.

I now

I now eat with spoons whence the family marks are carefully expunged, the observation of which led to my enquiries.

A man who has seen only this skirting of France would demonstrate the highest degree of presumption, were he to pretend to draw a parallel between it and England; but, to confine myself to what I have seen here, I may venture to affirm, that civilization, luxury, a general diffusion of the comforts of life, or by whatever other name you please to call it, is more advanced in Cornwall and Wales than it was in this province, even before the revolution.

Formerly there were two public walks on the banks of the river; but the stately elms which formed one of them have been lately cut down, to the great dissatisfaction of the inhabitants, in order to be sent to Brest for keels of ships.

The cathedral is a large edifice, of majestic appearance, but strikingly irregular in its exterior. Over its principal door is written "*Le peuple Français reconnaît l'Être Suprême.*" All the other churches and monasteries, which are numerous, have been converted (as the property of the state) into hospitals, stables, magazines,

zines, or manufactories of salt-petre. The church applied to this last use is well adapted to the purpose. I went with an English gentleman to see it, and no objection was made by the people whom we found there at work to our inspecting every part of their process, which is very simple. — Against one of the side walls are piled large heaps of wood-ashes, and near them two rows of casks with perforated bottoms, which are filled with the ashes thoroughly wetted. The water, after passing through the ashes, is received into tubs, and constitutes a vegetable alkaline lixivium. The opposite side of the church is filled with the ruins of old houses, and heaps of earth dug out of stables, slaughter-houses, and cemeteries, which last are full of the wrecks of humanity. These, after being macerated and mixed with the liquor drained through the wood ashes, are evaporated over a slow fire, until exhausted of the superfluous watery particles; after which the remaining part is put into large shallow coolers, on the sides of which the salt-petre shoots into crystals.

The workmen employed here are only twelve in number, and the quantity of salt-petre made
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is about fifty pounds a day, which, according to their account, costs only four livres and a half a pound; but this must not be depended upon, for they did not know the quantity of wood consumed. The wages of these people are inconceivably low, only 50 sols a day, and a ration of bread. Until lately they were paid only 35 sols, the addition having been made in consequence of the increasing dearness of the necessities of life: even now 50 sols will scarcely buy a pound of the worst veal brought to market. They complained of its insufficiency, and told us, that manufacturers in England were paid as much for two hours work; "but, nevertheless, it is for the republic." Either from this conjecture of the liberality of our country, or from some other cause, they treated us with particular respect, and answered all our questions with the most ready civility: not an interested civility, for they neither received, nor gave us room to suppose that they expected, any gratuity.

I quitted the place with strange sensations. The process which I had witnessed was whimsically shocking. When I saw amidst the earth the bones tossed about, "mine ached at the remembrance."

“membrance.” This earth, said I to myself, once, perhaps, belonged to men whom these houses sheltered, and against whose descendants in La Vendée it may, when fabricated into the *breath of destruction*, volley forth, in the shape of bullets, the coffins which once enclosed their forefathers. There is certainly no discovery which entitles to higher admiration the inventive genius of man, than that of artillery, in all its wonderful combinations; but, at the same time, it must be confessed, that no stronger proof of our miserable degeneracy and infatuation can be produced, than our application of it.

The bishop’s town-house I have mentioned. At a distance of less than a mile down the river stands what was once his country residence; but it is now the property of a naval officer, who bought it at a sale of national domains. I walked out to it the other day, and found it neither very large, nor very magnificent. It commands a good prospect of the river, and is pleasantly situated at the head of a large garden, filled by stone steps and strait walks. I found a gardener at work in it, who shewed me a superb
orangerie,

orangery, where, in large wooden cases, stand the finest orange and lemon-trees which I ever saw growing out of their native climes, and bearing ripe fruit in the month of March. I asked the gardener about the last bishop, who was a constitutional one, and was told, that he was guillotined about a year ago, at Brest, for being a federalist. I had heard so before.—“Was not he,” said I, “dragged away suddenly, and denied the consolation of taking leave of his family, who were in the house?”—“I believe,” answered the gardener, “he was; but those things were so common some time since, that no body attended to them. I mind my work, and ask no questions.”—I gave him an *assignat* of small value, which he accepted, and went away.

But a building which would have excited my curiosity more than the palaces of bishops and the houses of nobility, I arrived here too late to see—a Temple of Reason, built for the exercise of the new religion of France.—It stood on the summit of a lofty hill, close to the town, and consisted only of a few posts, from which rafters met at the top in a point to support the roof,
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the sides being open. Within it was adorned by festoons of oak-leaves, and was backed by a tree of liberty. It was the favourite rendezvous of the party of Robespierre, under whose auspicious reign it was erected. Here they swore eternal enmity to kings, and extirpation to aristocrats; and here their dances and sports were held, and the laws were read. In July last (not above ten days before the fatal *neuf Thermidor*) all the unmarried young women, and even all the children of the town, down to seven years old, were compelled to march in procession up the hill, preceded by the mayor and a band of music, and to take an oath never to marry any but true republicans and *sans-culottes*. About three months ago this edifice was either blown down, or its foundation secretly undermined in the night; and only a few broken posts and a little thatch now proclaim, "*Ilium fuit.*"

If the stories which are told of the extravagancies which this place gave birth to did not come from those who witnessed them (both French and English) their possibility might be doubted. I shall trouble you with only one of them.—A young republican of this town, on
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being ordered as a soldier to the frontiers, took a young woman of the place, and swore her here to be true to him; but even this test of the reality of her intention not being sufficient to quiet his jealous scruples, he absolutely wrote a letter to the convention, which was laid before them, stating his situation, and intreating that the girl might be put in a state of *requisition*, in her maiden capacity, until his return; lest, in his absence, she might be exposed to the allurements and seductions of aristocrats, who went about seeking to injure good republicans and *sans-culottes* like him. Can it be believed that a national congress should afford a serious hearing to such nonsense? Yet so it was; and she was actually commanded to remain single until the young man should return.—Not a very gallant compliment to the lady's constancy of temper, you will say! To do justice to the French, I must however observe, that all ranks and parties of them now deride the remembrance of these degrading follies.

There are two coffee-houses in the town, which are numerously resorted to by both the English and the French, notwithstanding an in-

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scription

scription placed over the door of one of them, forbidding any but good patriots to enter. The sign of this coffee-house gave rise lately to a refined piece of affectation:—it was a lion devouring a human body, and so exquisitely susceptible are the feelings of the present reigning party become, that they ordered the man of the house to blot out the body, “*it so reminded them of the days of Robespierre.*” Accordingly the lion only now is seen. Here I go daily to read the Paris newspapers, and meet not with any interruption. For this privilege it is expected that something be spent: a dish of excellent coffee costs 15 sols, and a glass of *liqueur* from 20 to 40 sols. Persons of all ranks and professions, officers, soldiers, and their wives, and the people of the town, mingle here promiscuously.

The market-place is spacious and convenient. In the centre of it stands, on a square pedestal, a statue of Liberty, with inscriptions on each side, some parts of which have been recently white-washed, to obliterate them. Among these I could decypher the word “*Montagne*,” and a few others of analogous signification,

cation, which a change of opinion has suddenly expunged from the vocabulary of French patriotism. — The market-day is still Saturday, when patrols of soldiers are sent on all the roads which lead to the town, to prevent forestalling, by compelling the country people to bring all their commodities into the market-place. Besides large heaps of wooden-shoes, the market generally affords some poultry and game, but not much butchers meat, except lean veal, of which I have never seen a want. Fish would be plentiful, were the boats permitted to go to sea; but, from a fear lest they should give information to the English, the fishermen are either interdicted, or subjected to so many difficulties, by being compelled to give security and take soldiers in their boats, that most of them have given up their employment. Of bread I have not since I have been here seen any deficiency; but I have been informed it was once, in the depth of last winter, so scarce, as to occasion a proclamation to be issued, that whoever sold it to a prisoner of war should be punished. We have always been able to procure it for *assignats*. It is for the most part very brown and

coarse, but some whiter and finer is made, and publicly exposed to sale, in spite of the law, ordering only *pain d'égalité* to be used, which every body laughs at, and nobody thinks proper to enforce. The worst quality of all this bread is a grittiness, being full of small sandy particles, arising from two causes—the softness of the grindstones—and the corn not being sufficiently washed, after the oxen have trodden it out, which is practised here instead of thrashing. This may serve to evince, in how small a degree calculous complaints are generated, by swallowing in our food similar materials to those of which stones and gravel in the human body are composed. The Bretons are remarkably healthy, and, I have been assured, are in general free from those diseases. Neither has any symptom of them been found among the English prisoners.

The prices of all articles in the markets and shops are increasing every day rapidly, owing to the depreciation of *assignats*. France is nominally dear, but to a man who possesses gold it is at present, perhaps, the cheapest country in the world. Meat is three livres a pound, and tolerable

lerable wine eight livres a bottle; but then a guinea will openly fetch 300 livres, and a *louis d'or* 350; the difference arises from the ignorance of the peasantry in regard to the former, and their consequent dislike to exchange them.

There is yet a little coasting trade carried on here. It was once more considerable, but they never had any foreign commerce. The shops are numerous, but not overstocked with commodities, and the shopkeepers always recommend their goods, not only to us, but to their countrymen, by saying they are "English," which is too true: they are the spoils of our merchants. I have been well informed, that previously to the war a prejudice in favour of our productions ran so high here, and over all this part of France, that hardly an article of dress and furniture of French manufacture could be sold. You cannot conceive with what avidity those prisoners who are artificers are sought out and employed. You will laugh to be told, that one of the representatives, either Guesno or Guermeur, sent for an English shoemaker to make him a pair of boots, and even prolonged his stay for a day, rather than depart without

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them.

them. Perhaps a better speculation than to send here a small cargo of our popular manufactures, in a vessel drawing not more than eleven feet, when peace shall be restored, and liberty of exchange unshackled, could not be projected. France will then open her *mines of gold and silver*. In other words, immense quantities of specie and other valuables, which are at this day buried, will be dug up and brought again into circulation. Some part of these concealments will undoubtedly be lost to their owners; who, after having entombed them, have either been chased from their native soil to return to it no more, or else have paid the debt of nature without communicating their secret. Ages hence their children will turn them up from the bosom of the earth; and, on seeing the effigy of the most unfortunate of kings, will recal to remembrance the most calamitous period of the history of their country.

Nothing surprized me more, on my arrival here, than to see beggars in every part of the town. The French officers at Brest had assured me, that there were no longer any in the republic; the government undertaking to make a provision

provision for those, who might have no ostensible means of subsisting. In consequence of this intelligence, I had dressed up a fine speculation, in favour at least of one change effected by the revolution.—If, said I, the noble and opulent are stripped and have fallen, yet the oppressed and miserable part of the community have emerged from that gulph of wretchedness, into which, under the ancient government, the most numerous class of inhabitants were plunged. The country, which has not in it any citizen so destitute as to want a sufficiency of food and raiment, cannot be so unhappy as we in England are fond of representing it.—What then was my astonishment, on entering Quimper, to find in every street, and in its environs, wretches of both sexes, who, with a livid aspect, and in a faltering voice, solicited of passengers a morsel of bread to appease their hunger, or that of a starving husband, wife, or child ! It was in vain to answer me, that these persons, by application to the municipality, might be relieved ;—so may all our poor, by applying to the work-house or parish-officer ; but who, nevertheless, will venture to affirm, that we have among us

no victims of hunger?—As I advance in my actual observations I gain a knowledge of facts, which lay open the real state of the country, and better enable me to appreciate the condition of the people, and the evils derived from equality incorrectly understood.

The inhabitants of this town formerly consisted, besides the working people, only of petty shopkeepers, and of many of the neighbouring gentry, who, though not nominally rich, were able, in this cheap quarter, to keep town-houses, in which, during the winter, they resided in great plenty and hospitality. These patricians are said to have held the *bourgeois* at an immeasurable distance, but to have been very charitably disposed towards the wants of the poor. The taste for gaming, which I have spoken of, is not new. It always flourished here; and formerly, during the week of the carnival, and some other seasons of festivity, it was not uncommon to find adventurers here, who had made a journey from Paris to get a pluck at the *Noblesse Bretonne*.

For two miles around the town I know the country pretty well, having always been fond
of

of walking and making excursions. In these little rambles I keep, however, in the most unfrequented tracks, and always meet with civility from the peasantry, though by the soldiery I have been twice compelled abruptly to return. The parts I have traversed are diversified by hill and dale, and very like the wilds of Devonshire, with a stream dashing through every bottom. There are innumerable copses, but large trees, except firs, are hardly ever seen. The soil is almost universally light and sandy, and abounds in lime-stone. Every cottage has an orchard, but the cyder is not reckoned equal to that of Normandy. I often inspect the labours of the husbandmen, and wish I could talk to them. Except some fine meadows near the town, through which two beautiful streams flow, the ground is chiefly employed to raise corn. The corn-fields are very neatly divided into lands, and their implements of husbandry, particularly their wheeled ploughs, are much superior to what I had expected to find. Nevertheless, either from the lightness of the soil, or want of skill on the part of the cultivators, the crops of wheat are very moderate, not above
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five or six for one.—They raise a few parsnips, and feed their horses with them to great advantage ; but I have not seen one field of turnips, cabbages, or carrots, as a winter stock for cattle, and very little clover. I have not yet conversed with any man, who has the least knowledge of what a succession of crops means : to fallow seems to be the only assistance which they give to worn-out grounds. They testify only ignorance and amazement, when an Englishman explains to them the attention bestowed upon this important part of farming, and a cultivation of artificial grasses among us. Potatoes are yet planted only in gardens and small patches ; but the culture of them every day extends, having more than once been recommended by authority. They frequently call it *la racine Anglaise*, and many of the young people relish the potatoe ; but their fathers and mothers, to whom until lately it was a novelty, prefer the most ordinary vegetable to it. It is a very common practice to irrigate not only meadows, but higher lands, which demonstrates an intelligent spirit ; the little troughs, which steal along through almost every field the streams
which

which the bounty of nature has supplied to the country, are well contrived, and answer, as I have observed, effectually. Upon the whole, what I have been able to see and hear of the management of grounds here, notwithstanding the great deficiency I have pointed out, exalts it above the humble opinion which I at first sight formed of it. You know my fondness of agricultural pursuits, and the impediments which have constantly arisen to prevent my indulgence of it.

The cattle are very small and mean, worse, I think, than any breed I ever noticed in the wildest part of North Wales, and certainly inferior to the moor breed of Devonshire and Cornwall. I speak only of countries which I know. Even in the meadows, though better, they are unaccountably small, considering the pasture. The sheep are proportionably diminutive. Admiral Bligh and I had one day the curiosity to put in the scales a hind quarter of lamb, which was purchased in the market for our table, and it weighed, the kidney and a bit of liver included, exactly—*thirteen ounces and a half*.—At Brest we had remarked the
§ smallness

smallness of the meat brought on board, several of the quarters of mutton not weighing more than three or four pounds each. The horses are low and hardy, but, by continual importations from other parts of France, are very superior to the cattle and sheep. The women here ride astride.

The houses of the peasantry are like those I described on my landing. I should oftener enter them were it not for dogs, which are chained close to the doors, by one of which I was seized by the thigh, and bitten through a thick pair of trowsers. Certainly the distresses of the times are greatly felt by all ranks of people in France; but in the cottages I have never seen want. One of the chief articles of the meals of the peasants is a sort of pancake, called *crape* (I spell like an Englishman) made chiefly of buckwheat flour, and eaten with milk. These people are, indeed, a separate race from the body of the French, and have a language and customs of their own, to which they are tenaciously attached. I much lament that I cannot speak Welch, although so many of my happier days have been passed in Wales.

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As to French, it is of no more use to me among these natives, at the distance of half a mile from the town, than if I were at Ispahan or Delhi. Almost all the gentry can speak this language. The Bretons and Welsh preserve another resemblance: the latter do not love *cwrw* (ale) better than the former do brandy. The evening of a market-day here presents as drunken a scene as I ever beheld in England; but these good folks do not appear to be so quarrelsome in their cups as ours generally are.

The diocese of Quimper stands in a district called Cornwall. The truly old British words *Pen*, and *Caer*, are affixed to the names of innumerable places in the circumjacent country; and mark the origin of this people, were we to seek no other proofs.

The town is surrounded by the *châteaux* of the gentry. Very few of the right owners live in them, and many of them are going fast to decay. Every where I see the dove-cotes demolished, which were the earliest victims of the first revolution; and I cannot lament their overthrow. The game-law now established
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gives liberty to every one to kill what game he may find upon his own ground, or that which he rents; and if any person, without leave, shoot on his neighbour's ground, he pays for each offence a fine of ten livres. How superior is this simple regulation, conceived in a spirit of equity, to a perplexed and odious code of penal statutes for the preservation of hares and partridges! Let me bring you acquainted with two other laws, which owe their birth to the revolution.—One of them is just passed, and exempts from the punishment of death, even after delivery, women who are tried for any crime when pregnant. “Can a woman so situated,” asks the framer of the decree, “become a mother in that tranquil state of mind, which is so necessary to ensure the physical good of her offspring? Besides, could we forget humanity, does not the republic act impolitically in probably preventing the birth of a new citizen; (for women in this condition almost ever miscarry) or in condemning the mother to bring forth a half-formed being, which is usually distorted in mind and body, incapable of serving the state, and of propagating

"gating its species?"—I am sure I hear you join me in unqualified applause of the principle of this humane and considerate institution.—The other interdicts a duel, in all cases whatever, under the penalty of death to the survivor or survivors.—The late king of Prussia said, that to determine whether single combat, in certain cases, ought, or ought not, to be abolished, required a congress of all the monarchs in Europe. Had he lived to witness the shocking grossness of speech and manners, which prevail among modern Frenchmen, for want of this or some other curb of a private nature, I think his uncertainty would have vanished, without troubling the crowned heads to assemble,—At least mine has.

The French often boast of the unexplored subterranean treasures of their country; and some among them are sanguine enough to believe that they shall rival England in her collieries. There are near Quimper two veins of what is called *charbon de terre* worked; but I have been assured by an English surgeon, that on analysis he found it to be *not coal*. I picked up a piece, one day, at the mouth of a pit,
carried .

carried it home, and put it into the fire, where it became red-hot, without consuming. To what use it is applied by those who extract it, I know not. It is, however, certain, that they have several times been industrious in trying to find out miners among the English prisoners; and in a few instances have succeeded in seducing our men to go and work at some mines (of what I do not know) which are said to lie near Brest.

The inhabitants of the town, or troops of the municipality as they are called, are obliged to do the ordinary duties here, when the regular soldiers are absent. In certain cases, however, they are allowed to perform this service by proxy. The present price of a substitute is ten livres a day, which is judged to be more than the worth of a day's labour, though it will not purchase more than a pound and a half of bread, a pound of veal, and a bottle of indifferent wine.

I have not yet said any thing to you of the French regular troops whom I have seen since I have been landed. There is not at present any complete regiment here, but there are detachments

tachments of infantry from several. Every day I see the different guards parade, march off, and relieve; and twice I have seen a detachment exercise, and perform their evolutions, which, though few and simple, were very awkwardly executed. Certainly a stranger, who should neglect to calculate the force of other causes, would start, on being told, that before these raw levies (to use Mr. Gibbon's words, as nearly as I can recollect them, on an occasion not very dissimilar) the disciplined legions of Germany, the sons of chivalry of Castille, the gallant nobles of their own country, and even the hardy freemen of Britain, have been compelled to flee. In vain would he look for those usual indications of excellence, and prognostics of success, silence, attention, and the exact performance of movements in a great body, which we find in an individual.—In their room he would see battalions, composed indeed of stout and healthy young men, but clumsily and confusedly drawn up, with uneven ranks and broken files, whose bold looks, slovenly attire, and unrestrained carriage, would seem to proclaim equal defiance of their enemies and

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their leaders. Talk to them, and they will try to make you believe, that they wish to decide all battles by the bayonet only; and yet at this weapon they would to a certainty be beaten by the English, were the forces on each side in every other respect perfectly equal; for their bayonets, which I have measured, are shorter, and worse fitted for purposes of destruction, than ours. When they charge, nothing is more common than to hear them talk to each other, and fancy an Englishman, an Austrian, or a Spaniard, beneath their point, and crying for quarter.—I acknowledge freely, that the bravery of the French is as unquestionable as the light of the sun; but this in itself is inadequate to the achievements which we have recently witnessed. To that lively courage which stimulates them to perpetual attacks; to their enthusiastic ardour in the cause of their invaded country; and above all to their undiminisbable numbers, must be attributed those extraordinary events, which have confounded all political calculation, and filled Europe with amazement, consternation, and mourning.

The present pay of the common soldier is

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ten sols a day and a ration of provisions, but no wine when quartered in towns. They are furnished by the state with necessaries; so that the money is for pocket expences only. The name of the general officer now commanding here is Klingly. He is a native of Alface, and one of the largest men I ever saw, being at least six feet four inches high, and proportionably stout. I have once dined in his company, and sat next to him, when he told me, that he had been in England, and, among other parts of it, at Castle Howard, the seat of Lord Carlisle; but in what capacity he had visited there, he did not explain to me.—His birth is reported to be obscure, and his advancement sudden.—
Adieu.

L E T T E R IX.

Quimper, 15th April, 1795.

By a news-paper, which I lately read, I find that the miseries and complaints of the English prisoners here have at length been communicated to our government; and that Sir Morton Eden is absolutely arrived in France, in order to negotiate the terms of an exchange. This subject, which I have forborne to touch upon before, is a very serious one; and a relation of the sufferings which the prisoners of war here have undergone, from the injustice and cruelty of their treatment, would form a most afflicting narrative. The following statement, which was drawn up on the spot, by the Honourable Mr. Wesley*, and transmitted to Mr. Pitt, you may depend upon as a genuine and faithful representation.

* Brother of the Earl of Mornington, who with his sister Lady Anne Fitzroy, was taken in a packet, by French frigate, on their passage from Lisbon.

“ In

“ Quimper, 18th October, 1794.

“ In the beginning of July last, the prisons
“ of Quimper contained about 2,800 fine young
“ men, about which period a jail distemper
“ broke out among them, which has already
“ carried off upwards of 1,200. This disease
“ still continues to rage with violence, and is
“ not to be attributed to any general ill state of
“ the air, but to the following local circum-
“ stances.

“ First—Want of cleanliness, from there being
“ no necessaries provided, whence the whole
“ circumambient air becomes contaminated by
“ so many people.

“ Secondly — Bad provisions, and those in
“ very small quantities, the daily allowance for
“ seven prisoners being only six pounds of bad
“ black bread; every fourth day these seven
“ persons receive also two pounds of salt pork
“ among them; and on the intermediate days
“ they are served with a scanty mess of horse-
“ beans. They have bad water, and no wine,
“ or any spirits of any kind; nor have even
“ those who possess the means leave to pur-
“ chase those articles.

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“ Thirdly,

“ Thirdly—Want of bedding and clothes, & the commissary of the prison of Pontenazan, near Brest, having stripped the greater part of the victims, who had the misfortune to pass through his hands, of their clothes, bedding, and money*.

“ Fourthly—Want of proper hospitals and attendance on the sick ; the hospital, which is intended for English prisoners, being too small to receive half the number that are seized with the fever. The remainder are carried into a damp room, and laid upon straw, without any covering ; and the above-mentioned prison allowance is their only support.

“ This is a fair and impartial statement of the situation of our unfortunate countrymen. The winter, should they remain here, will

* This commissary was ordered by the representatives then at Brest, to take a blanket from each prisoner who possessed two, and to pay him for it. He executed this commission by turning out of bed, into the court of the prison, all the prisoners, in the middle of the night, when he took away *not half, but all their blankets*, without making any recompence whatever for them. Their complaints of this robbery produced no notice or redress.

“ open

“ open a new scene of distress, as the few who
“ may be spared, will then perish by cold and
“ hunger, as they will be absolutely destitute of
“ clothes, blankets, and other necessaries.”

After this it were almost unnecessary to pursue enquiry farther; but as some well-authenticated anecdotes have been told to me, which, besides their relation to the subject, strongly tend to evince the temper of the times at different periods, and thereby become in some measure associated with the general politics of the country, I shall give them to you, after first premising, that I believe the greatest part of these nefarious and disgraceful proceedings are attributable not to a deficiency of either proper liberality, or proper directions, on the part of the present French government, but rather to the villany of their subordinate agents, who have violated the latter, in order to profit by the former. We know that a *traitement*, in *assignats*, to officers, who are prisoners, has been decreed by the convention, and its rate settled; although, from the multitude of offices through which it has to pass, and the obstacles and impediments thrown in our way when we attempt

to trace the cause of the stoppage, hitherto we have not been able to recover any part of it. It is also fair to state, that since a new commissary of prisoners has been appointed here, the daily ration of provisions, by being equitably issued, is found very tolerably sufficient. Farther, in justice to the people I am among, let me declare, that since I have been landed (except a petty instance or two of splenetic insult) I have had no cause to complain of oppressive treatment, or to lament the want of as reasonable an extension of liberty as I could expect.

I have said, that in the winter bread was forbidden to be sold to the prisoners, and so was fuel, notwithstanding the severity of the season, and although no allowance of it was issued to them. Had not the humanity of some of the inhabitants of the town induced them to step forward to their relief, in defiance of the penalty of imprisonment, many of the English must have perished from cold.

The case of Lieutenant Robinson, of the Thames frigate, will set the conduct of the agents of tyranny in its proper light. This gentleman

tleman was taken in the latter end of October 1793, when *terror* was the *order of the day*, and in the engagement, which led to the capture of the ship, lost one of his legs above the knee, and was severely wounded in the other. On his arrival at Brest he was sent on shore to an hospital, and attributes his being now alive to a good constitution only; for he was neglected by the surgeons, and obliged to eat food in the highest degree improper for a wounded man. He once applied to the chief commissary for permission to send a person to buy some eggs, vegetables, and other refreshments for him, and was brutally refused. Mr. Robinson found, however, in some nuns, who were compelled to attend here, tender and careful nurses. These poor women were subjected to the grossest insults, and the harshest treatment. They had accustomed themselves, from motives of religious commiseration towards the sick, to employ their leisure hours in praying by the couches of those who chose to hear them; but this pious and humane practice was interdicted to them, by an especial mandate from the representatives on mission here; and two of them, who were found

found guilty of transgressing the order, were dragged to prison, amidst reproaches, taunts, and execrations.

Some months after, when his cure was advanced, though far from completed, Mr. Robinson, in a hope of changing for the better, requested to be removed to Pontenazan prison, about two miles from Brest, which was the general receptacle of the English. Thither he was conveyed in a cart, with several more sick prisoners, and thrust into an old rope-house, containing 700 people, who shortly after were increased to 1,400. This room contained no beds for the sick, and his stump was not healed. At first they were allowed to walk for air in the day-time in an inclosed court; but this indulgence did not last long, and thenceforth, on *no occasion whatever*, was a prisoner suffered to go out of the room. Nay the windows were forbidden to be opened, though it was the beginning of summer. However, upon this interdiction being communicated to the representatives at Brest, they ordered the windows to be kept closed on *one side only*. This rigorous crowded confinement soon induced putrid diseases,

safes, which swept off twenty and thirty persons a day, who were thrown without covering into a large hole, and quick-lime heaped on the bodies. The daily allowance of the prison was a pound and a quarter of black sandy bread, four ounces of salt pork, a pint of sour wine, and at night a soup, of horse-beans boiled in water. The pork they were obliged to eat always raw, for there was neither a kitchen, nor any fire allowed, by which it could be dressed; and the sentinels were strictly forbidden to permit the prisoners to send out and make purchases of fuel, or aught else that they might need.

This huge dungeon contained people of all ages. One day the commissary of prisoners pointed out to Prieur de la Marne (one of the members of the convention on mission) some little children, who were in a destitute miserable condition, and asked what should be done to relieve their wretchedness. "They are young vipers," cried this gentle and compassionate representative, stamping with fury, "turn them out to graze; grass is good enough for the English!"—This same Prieur, who is now
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“thorn of his beams,” and in arrest, is well known for his severities and oppressions in Brittany. It seems, that he entertained hardly a more favourable opinion of the people of Brest, than of the English; for at one of the meetings of the popular society there, after a great execution, he affirmed that the town did not contain three real patriots; and that all persons who wore mourning for traitors (meaning those who had just been guillotined) were sharers in their guilt.

On the 5th of last May, Mr. Robinson, with other prisoners, was ordered to Quimper, at the distance of forty-five miles from Brest. A man on crutches, who had but one leg, and that crippled, might be supposed to be entitled to the indulgence of a vehicle for his conveyance. But when this unfortunate officer asked how he was to be transported to the place of his destination, he received for answer—“Walk, to be sure!”—In vain did he represent his utter incapacity. He was commanded to set out with the other prisoners; and complied. At the end of a mile he found himself totally exhausted, and must have lain down to perish on the road,
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or await the casual humanity of passengers, had not the soldiers who formed the escort, lifted him into a cart, which conveyed the baggage. When they reached Quimper in a heavy rain, they were all put, without distinction, into an old convent, and during the whole of this day received for food and bedding—*straw* only.—Finding himself wet and feverish, and possessing neither dry clothes or a bed, Mr. Robinson requested, as a favour, that he might be allowed to sleep for the first night at any house in town, observing to his keepers that he could not run away; and offering, in case of compliance with his entreaty, to defray not only his own expence, but that of the sentinel who might be placed over him.—He was peremptorily refused.

Soon after Lady Anne Fitzroy, and her brother Mr. Wesley, arrived here. He who recollects the former courtesy and gallantry of this once polished nation will scarcely believe, that an attempt could be made to immure a young, helpless, and beautiful woman, within the walls of a common prison. “The age of chivalry
“is indeed no more!” By much supplication,
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and after considerable difficulty, her ladyship obtained permission to hire an apartment in an adjoining house, and to be served by a *traiteur* with what she wanted for herself and her attendants. She was, however, forbidden to hold any communication with the people of the town, and a sentinel was placed over her to enforce the order. In the process of her confinement, liberty of walking in a garden, at the back of her prison, was granted to her ladyship; and this signal indulgence was followed up with leave to walk in the town, or to be carried in a sedan which she had borrowed, guarded, however, by her sentinel, lest her machinations might endanger the republic. The humane beneficence exerted by Lady Anne and her brother, to all ranks of their poor countrymen in captivity, are proclaimed here in terms of the most enthusiastic applause and gratitude. Misery, in whatever shape it appeared, excited their compassion, and called forth their bounty. They supplied the unhappy sufferers in the common prison with raiment, bedding, and food, without which assistance many of them must have perished.—You will observe, by one
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of my former letters (which, long ere this you must have received) that I had not the good fortune to see her ladyship. Admiral Bligh was more lucky, when he carried his son, in last January, on board the ship she was in, to receive her protection. We have known, for some time past, that they arrived safely in England.

Were it necessary to continue the subject, after what you have read, I am sorry to say, that it is in my power to adduce many more instances of premeditated systematic neglect, cruelty, and oppression, with which prisoners have been treated in this part of France during the present war. Many of the evils they have endured must indeed be placed to the account of Precini, the commissary, the same blockhead whose indecent democratic manners, in a company of ladies, so much disgusted me soon after I came to this place. This man has at length been superseded, and his office filled by a very plain honourable character, who extends to all in his department not only strict justice, but every fair and consistent indulgence, which the ameliorated state of public sentiments allows. The dismissal of his predecessor, which was of
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the unceremonious kind, we chiefly owe to the representations made by Captain Kittoe, who had long witnessed his iniquity, and combated it, after a long struggle, successfully. The defence which this gentleman made at the *club* (or popular society) of the town, before which he was denounced, for "harsh and unjust usage of the prisoners of war," shall, however, be recorded in his justification. He did not deny that he had issued to them bad and unwholesome provisions; but this, he said, was only in compliance with orders he had received; in proof of which he named a representative, who had publicly directed, that the store-houses at Brest should be searched for damaged biscuit, "which," said he, "is good enough for those — of Englishmen!" Had the charges against him turned on this single point, he must, therefore, have been acquitted of them; but it was clearly proved against him, that he had been guilty of innumerable acts of oppression and speculation.

While Precini locked up and cheated the prisoners, there were not wanting others to sport with their misery. I dare say you have
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often read, in extracts taken from the Paris news-papers, of a noisy speaker in one of the sections, distinguished by his ridiculous assumption of the name of BRUTUS. This man is now a private sentinel, although but a few months since he was a general officer, and commanded the troops here. He was (like Tribout) originally a barber. During his command he took great delight in harassing the prisoners, and adding to their distresses. In one of these freaks an unlucky prognostic occurred of the decline of this great man's glory. Some Englishmen who had broken out of prison, in order to effect their escape, were retaken, and brought back. To amuse himself, Brutus ordered them to be shackled with the heaviest irons which could be procured, and in this condition marched them several times round the prison-yard; in the centre of which, encompassed by his satellites, he stood, enjoying their pain and awkward movements. A Guernsey-man, who was of the number, as they passed by the General, looked him full in the face, and cried, "*Cbacun à son tour.*" At the moment it caused only

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an increase of the universal merriment; but the prediction seemed to be in some measure verified, when, soon after, Brutus's truncheon was taken from him, and a musquet put in its place.

This letter will be forwarded to you by Mr. Robinson, the gentleman whose name is so often mentioned in it. After a captivity of eighteen months, he has received permission, in consideration of his wounds, to return to England, on condition of sending back a French officer of equal rank to himself.—Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER X.

Quimper, 30th April, 1795.

AT length the clouds of misfortune begin to separate, and a gleam of hope (though remote) breaks athwart the gloom, and points to England; whence I have lately received letters from those who are dearest to me, in which class I need not say you are included. You were right to be so brief and guarded in your expressions; although, as it happened, your letter reached me unopened, through a private channel. I observe what you say to me of the steps you are taking to bring about my exchange. Several Englishmen whom I know have lately effected theirs; and to my great joy (though I shall deeply feel the loss of his society and protecting influence) the Admiral every day expects an order to arrive from the maritime agent at Brest, for his liberation. A Captain Courand, who, on the 1st of June, commanded *Le Sans Pareil*, of 84 guns, is to be

exchanged for him, and is now in France, pressing the committee of public safety to ratify the agreement, and forward the necessary passport. You must observe, that Admiral Bligh is exchanged for a *Captain*, because at the time of our sailing from England, in September last, he bore only that rank, in which capacity he commanded the *Alexander*, and consequently as such only could be exchanged. Innumerable are the obstacles which I foresee to prevent my accompanying him, when his passport shall arrive; but, as I am on very good terms with the commissary, I shall at least endeavour to obtain leave to go to Brest, in order to solicit permission from the representatives there to pass over into England, for the purpose of procuring a French officer of my rank to be returned in exchange for me. If success attend my petition (of which I am not in utter despair, as it will be backed by the interest of the Admiral) I shall be the bearer of my own letter; and if I miscarry, he will convey to you this sequel of the adventures and observations of your friend.

Deprived as you are in England of all communication with this country, except through
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the circuitous route of Switzerland and Germany, I often hear you ask me, What are the present politics and sentiments of the French? A man at the distance of five hundred miles from the metropolis can poorly answer such a question; but if you will be contented with a description of what the politics and sentiments of the people of Quimper and its neighbourhood are, according to the best information which I can procure; and accept of a string of opinions, derived from conversing with strangers, and from reading newspapers and fresh publications, as a solution of your enquiry, behold me ready to contribute to the extent of my ability to your gratification.

Here the friends of royalty, federalism, and an undivided commonwealth, struggle against each other with reciprocal vibrations. Federalism is, however, on the decline, and its supporters, attached as they are to the local prejudices which they contend for a continuation of, perceive the impossibility of carrying their point, and are fast melting into the two other great masses. Royalism, though bent to the earth, is not crushed. Its partizans are still numerous.

and its hopes sanguine, too sanguine, I fear, for accomplishment. My political principles are, you see, unchanged since we parted; and I still think a limited monarchy the best of governments. Had I been born a Frenchman, I should have struggled as hard for the revolution of 1789, as I should have resisted with all my might that of 1792. Much as I hate despotism, I am scarcely less a foe to democracy; a sentiment which accords pretty well with those of my royal friends here. Since I have resided among the French, I have met with only one person, a lady (whose husband had once a place in the household and has emigrated) who has expressed to me a wish to see the old system restored. She, poor woman, cannot separate the splendour of a court, and the unlimited power of a king, from the prosperity and happiness of the people, always describing the latter as a direct and necessary consequence of the former. I am surprized to find that the royalists prefer Count d'Artois to his brother, Monsieur. They call the Count a bold and decided character, although they do not spare his former profligate dissipation. To the little Louis, "*le monarque*."

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“ *au berceau*,” as they call him, they look rather with regret than expectancy, not unmingled with apprehension, lest violence or treachery should be used against him; but this fear I think groundless, because his preservation will best serve the interest of those whom he is among. I am assured that his morals are corrupted, and his health destroyed.—Unhappy infant! what a lesson on the instability of human grandeur does he furnish!

“ *Un faible rejetton——entre les ruines*

“ *De cet arbre fécond, coupé dans ses racines.*”

HENRIADE, 7th Canto.

The royalist party is strongest in the country, and the republican in the town. The most numerous class of inhabitants in the latter, the little housekeepers, find their importance increased, and their vanity flattered, by becoming members of clubs and political societies, and being admitted into municipal posts and honours. Doubtless, even in this part of France, which has long been regarded with a jealous eye by the government, the royalists are not equal in number to their formidable antagonists:

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they will, however, I am confident, fly to arms, if ever a favourable opportunity of attacking their oppressors be presented to them. Whenever I find myself (which sometimes happens) in a little knot of these good people, almost all of whom have either fathers, brothers, sons, husbands, or other near relations emigrated; and when I listen to the downfall of the convention, and hear them, by the restoration of a king, restore themselves to their forfeited honours and estates; it brings to my remembrance what passed, seventeen years ago, among the loyalists of Maryland, where I was then, as now, a prisoner of war. I hear similar fallacious calculations made, unsupported expectancies indulged, and ardent resolutions adopted, to end, I fear, in similar disappointment. The paper-money, divisions and mistrusts of parties, my own situation at both periods, and other circumstances, render the parallel very striking to me. To dash, with rude hand, the cup of consolation from the lips of these unfortunate people, were the extreme of cruelty; but when they appeal to me, by asking whether armies of Englishmen and emigrants may not be expected

pected to execute their airy speculations, I cannot become a partner of the deceit, by administering to the delirium. Whatever might once be the opening presented to us for the attacking of France in her vitals, by a co-operation with the armies of La Vendée, that season is passed, never to return. To commence, at this declining period of the contest, such a system, were almost to proclaim, that while we believed it possible to subjugate France by a coalition of exterior force, we disdained to profit by the arms of Frenchmen, in a cause which we called their own. Besides, if a publication, which is stuck up in all parts of the town, dated the 1st of *Floreal*, at Rennes, and signed by ten representatives, and twenty-two *Chouan* chiefs, with Caumartin at their head, may be believed, the Vendéans have made their peace, and submitted to the republic, after having for more than two years caused the most powerful diversion in favour of her external enemies. But this my friends here intreat me to despise; and, when I point out to them its marks of authenticity, assure me, that Charette will never lay down his arms, but on
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the condition of royalty being re-instated; that he is only temporizing, and will soon break out stronger than ever. I listen in silence, and know not which way to turn my faith.—What shall I say of this extraordinary character, Charette! who, whatever be his future intentions, has hitherto, certainly, displayed extraordinary powers of mind, and Antæus-like arisen fresh from every fall. I am acquainted with two people who personally know him, and describe his talents; courage, and perseverance, in terms of enthusiastic admiration. The French do not scruple to affirm (but here I suspect their love of exaggeration, not unmixed with national vanity, to preponderate) that the war of La Vendée has cost to the republic more men than all her foreign conflicts united. If, instead of men, perplexity and vexation were substituted, the account would be more credible.

The proclamation which announces a conclusion of the war of La Vendée is not the only one, which strikes at this moment the public eye, in Quimper. His Prussian Majesty, Frederick William, our good and faithful ally, has, we are told, also made his peace with the republic,

public. When I recollect his threatening bombastic language, and the mighty irruption made into Champagne, not quite three years ago, by this pigmy in the shoes of a giant, I can compare him to nothing but the month (April) I write in, which is said to come in like a lion and go out like a lamb. The French themselves cannot help adverting to his former menaces, and sneering at them, when compared with his present meekness and tender concern for the effusion of human blood. The preamble of the proclamation states, that, "in Pilnitz, a part of his Prussian Majesty's dominions, the first partitioning treaty of the territory of France was executed. That now the republic has demonstrated to kings and ministers, that she is not only victorious but invincible, she will prove to them that she is generous, and willing to grant peace, upon terms consistent with her dignity, to all her enemies. And, that henceforth the stability of her government, not only to conclude, but to guarantee, treaties and alliances, ought not to be doubted, &c. &c;"—A peace with Spain,

likewise,

likewise, is reported to be in great forwardness ; so that it is probable, before the end of this year, England alone will have the contest to maintain ; and well, I trust, it will be maintained by our victorious fleet ?

If then the coalition be on the point of its dissolution, and Charette has laid down his arms, either we must abandon the subjugation of France, or seek for other means to accomplish it, which, if they exist at all, are internal. Nothing can be more dazzling and imposing than the great success of the French against their foreign enemies, and the seeming ease with which the vast machine of the republican government moves ; but this smooth exterior conceals a hollow and ulcerated inside. The numberless abuses subsisting in the multiplied public offices, which defy control or abolition ; (what think you of its being asserted in the convention, that in the post-office department more than *thirty-nine thousand* persons receive salaries ?) the depreciation of *assignats*, which proceeds in a ratio continually increasing, a piece of money, which eight weeks since sold for 140 livres, now fetching 400 ; and, above all,

all, the enormous public expenditure, which almost defies computation; are causes of the most serious alarm to the supporters of the revolution. The last of them, if not checked, must produce a national bankruptcy, and overturn this government, as it did the monarchy; but whether to give birth to a new form of democracy, or to the restoration of a king, who shall say!

By the report of the new financier, Johannot, made to the convention—

	livres.
The national expence of the month of <i>Nivose</i> last was - - -	} 423,374,450 - or - £. 18,522,632
The receipt of taxes in the same month was - - - - -	} 57,168,733 - or - 2,501,132
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Excess of expenditure, rejecting shil- lings and pence, and reckoning a livre at 10½ d. - - - -	} 366,205,717 - or £. 16,021,500
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In the succeeding month, *Pluviose*, the difference was still more enormous: it exceeded the receipt by 443,164,244 livres, or £. 19,388,435. "The trappings of royalty" would poorly keep pace with this unprecedented profusion, which is hourly increasing, by the inevitable augmentation of salaries to all
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the public servants, both civil and military. The naval officers have had a considerable addition to their pay since I left Brest; and, as a signal to all beneath, the stipend of the members of the convention has been increased from eighteen to thirty-six livres a day.

I do not pretend to know the nature and extent of the present taxes; but I remember the favourite scheme of a heavy land-tax, in lieu of all others, was trumpeted forth at the commencement of the revolution, not that it dates its birth at so recent a period. Our principle of taxing consumption, they treated with great contempt; but I have reason to believe they will soon adopt it, as I have lately read a most spirited and ingenious attack on Cambon, and some of his predecessors, in which it is extolled. The most considerable of the present imposts is a duty of 20 *per cent.* on all lands and houses. This was calculated to produce 260 millions, and makes the annual value of landed property (including buildings) to be 1300 millions of livres. Let us suppose (dreadful supposition!) that a third part of this is sequestrated, and in the disposal of the government.

ment. Call this 440 millions ; and farther, let us presume, that all these houses and lands will be sold at 25 years purchase (which, if the nature of a part of the property, and the fears of reclamation, particularly of the estates of the later emigrants, be considered, is perhaps too much) the amount will be 11 milliards. This is the calculation of the most sanguine of the French with whom I have conversed on the subject ; and even this, terrifying as it is to compute or read, seems likely to be insufficient. Johannot reckons the national means at 15 milliards 226 millions, even after the allowances, which justice and humanity dictate, shall be deducted from them ; and proposes to coin immediately 150 millions of copper, in order to afford support to the declining credit of *assignats*. I need not tell you, that I possess no *data* to formally controvert this statement of the financier ; but I beg leave to observe, that his whole report, which I have carefully read, is conceived in those sanguine and flattering terms, which appear to me to have sprung from a pre-concerted determination of exhibiting the favourable side of the picture, and keeping the
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people in good-humour. I have heard it publicly derided, and have been told that both its premises and conclusions are false. In addition to the allowance which he hints is to be made to the relations and creditors of emigrants, under certain restrictions, is to be placed a complete restitution of the properties of the Brissotine party, and all who suffered under the tyranny of Robespierre: at least such expectations have been holden out in the convention. He also states, that there are now eight milliards of *assignats* in circulation, and that only three milliards more need be added to them. For the justness of this last declaration his word must be taken, as he does not tell us why he limits to this sum the future emission.—Query, How are the creditors of the old government to be considered, when the day of liquidation shall arrive? A lottery, it seems, is projected, of all the forfeited houses; and the scheme, at least here, appears to be relished.—There is yet another source of revenue, of a delicate nature, which I sometimes hear and read boasted of:—requisitions from the conquered countries; and confiscations of the church lands in the Austrian

Austrian Netherlands.—How far these will be practicable to any great amount, I leave to you to determine. Remember, that the comparatively trifling levies, which have been already made upon the Belgians, are said to have rendered the French name odious in that country.

But little facts sometimes impress conviction on the mind, when a laboured detail has failed. —Until lately there were not any *assignats* in circulation of more than two thousand livres each in value; but, on the petition of the army contractors, *assignats* of ten thousand livres each have been fabricated, “in order to lessen the *expence of carriage*, which is become enormous.”—One of the Paris papers, two months ago, assigned as a reason for raising its price, the increasing value of paper, which was then 80 livres a ream. “How,” asks the editor, “can it be otherwise, when government, by contract, is every day supplied with six thousand reams for its consumption in printing off *assignats*!!”

All *assignats* of the value of more than 100 livres, bearing the effigy of Louis XVI. were proscribed some time since, except in the pur-

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chasing of national domains. This was one of the last piratical manœuvres of Cambon, and was every way worthy of the financier of Robespierre. However it somewhat contributed to lessen the immense load of circulating paper.

When I sum up the component parts of this stupendous system, and contemplate it in the aggregate, I must confess myself to be staggered, and almost ready to pronounce against the ability of this wonderful people to continue the contest in which they are engaged. But, after revolving the subject in every point of view in which it presents itself to my mind, I am decidedly of opinion, that not even a national insolvency would produce the effect, which some of the powers combined against them sought in its commencement. The dismemberment of France cannot be accomplished, without the extermination of its inhabitants, even though Mr. Playfair write a second profound disquisition to demonstrate its necessity and practicability; and how far a "*bellum internecinum*," against twenty-four millions of people is either in its principle to be desired, or in its accomplishment to be expected,

expected, may at least exercise the casuistry of humble searchers of truth, like you and me.

That the French wish for peace, cannot be doubted by those who are in a habit of reading their daily chronicles, and listening to their sentiments; but even this event, desirable as they feel it to be, they will not purchase at the expence of the integrity of the empire, or by suffering any power, or combination of powers, on earth, to dictate to them what shall be their form of government, or even to interfere in the most inconsiderable point about their internal regulations. Such, upon my honour, I believe to be the unalterable determination of a large majority of the French nation. A peace with us they especially covet. I shall not now stay to examine what are the impediments on our side to its completion. We are accused of wishing to monopolize the trade of Europe to both the Indies. According to the latest accounts I have read from one of them, notwithstanding our rapid conquests in the beginning, the tide of victory seems to be so far balanced, as to render the event dubious; and even if we finally succeed in that quarter, it may be-

come a question, whether "*le jeu vaut la chandelle*." The yellow fever, and the resistance of a million of men, suddenly awakened to a perception of their rights, are antagonists not to be despised. "Emancipate the negroes, and the commercial ascendancy of England is forever destroyed," said Danton. My opinion is very different; and I am persuaded, that if the Charibean islands were at this moment independent states, our shipping would not be less numerous (for our immense capital would flow into other channels) nor would sugar, rum, coffee, and Barbadoes water, be less attainable to administer to our luxury. If the opulence of England be founded on the basis of African slavery; if the productions of the tropics can be dispensed to us only by the blood and tears of the negro, I do not hesitate to exclaim—"Perish our commerce;" let our humanity live!

By the way, I am often asked, why we joined against them in a confederacy, whose aims (they say) were as irreconcilable to each other, as to justice. This query I have so little satisfaction in answering, that, for the sake of argument,

ment, and to prevent being totally overborne, I retort it upon them, and accuse them of being the aggressors : a contest in which nothing is gained or lost, for both affirm, and both deny.

It is, nevertheless, certain in the mean time, that a hatred of us, as a nation, is universally diffused among the favourers of the revolution. When declaiming on this head, their extravagance is sometimes not unentertaining. They have collected, and believed, without examination of their absurdity, a number of wild and ridiculous tales about us : such as that there existed a scheme to set the Duke of York upon the throne of France ; that Marat and Robespierre were in the pay of Mr. Pitt, and acted by his directions, &c. &c. They stun one, indeed, with repetitions of the name of Mr. Pitt, and execrations of his politics, which, I often tell them, is the highest compliment they can pay him. " His father," said an orator in the convention, " infused into him, in his infancy, his hatred of France, and, like Hamlet, car of old, swore him to eternal enmity against the French name." But, perhaps, another

great man, whose share in provoking the war, and sounding the knell of peace, has not been inconsiderable, may feel disappointed on being told, that his name in this part of France is never mentioned, and is even unknown. The splendid pebble, with which Mr. Burke, after the first revolution, endeavoured to perturb the lake of French tranquillity, has not yet spread its undulations to this distant shore.—To descend from Mr. Burke to his vaunted antagonist Tom Paine, I was, on coming into France, curious to learn what had become of this wandering demagogue, whom the delirium of the moment had rendered conspicuous. For a long time I could get no intelligence of him: to some his name was new; and others, with difficulty recollecting it, said he was guillotined. My enquiries remained unsatisfied, until I chanced to read in a news-paper a decree of the convention for his release from arrest, with other deputies of the party of Brissot. From this time, until a few days since, I had ceased to think about a being, whose name was never mentioned; when a news-paper again presented it to me, in a report of Courtois to the convention,

vention, dignified by the title of "founder of liberty in the two worlds." Notwithstanding this consolatory panegyric, I am of opinion that Mr. Paine is not destined to shine on the theatre of French politics. But whither shall he retire to better his fortune, and re-lume his fame? America would *now* prove a sterile and unproductive soil for the transplantation of such a genius; while ungrateful Europe (the French dominions excepted) shutting every avenue against him, bids him wander, like a second Cain, without an asylum, or a resting-place.

To return to my subject.—The present period is certainly an interesting one in the history of the revolution. The convention is not popular, and every day loses ground in the affection of the people. You can form no adequate idea of the closeness with which its proceedings are scrutinized, and the asperity with which they are attacked, in the news-papers, and in private circles. Since I have resided among the French, freedom of opinion and speech has made an extraordinary progress. Heads which, six months ago would have "bided but the whetting of

“the axe,” now declaim unintimidated, and unrestrained. Has the proposition of Merlin de Thionville, for the dissolution of the convention, and the election of a national assembly, yet reached you? It was strongly defended, and strongly reprobated. For the present, Merlin has been prevailed upon to withdraw his motion; but, I think, it will be resumed soon: the royalists eagerly long for it, and predict, from the moment it shall be decreed, the restoration of monarchy, provided the election be free and general; but this is not expected, as a proposal, in case it must be adopted, has been already started, to oblige the people to elect a majority of the present legislators. In the mean time the new constitution is loudly clamoured for by the republicans. Sieyes, who is at length emerged from behind the curtain which had so long concealed him, and others, are said to be preparing it; and a very beautiful metaphysical theory of impracticability, I doubt not, it will prove. Let this be as it may, I dread an agitation of these questions, and become doubly desirous to get out of France before they are started; for, during the time
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of the election, we shall at least be locked up and half starved, if no worse befall us.

But another question, which involves more important consequences than at first appear, *viz.* Whether the leaders of the ancient committee of public safety, Barrere, Collot d'Herbois, and Billaud de Varennes (Vadier having escaped) shall be tried, or not? has during the last six weeks almost absorbed every other consideration. It was, in fact, an experiment of the strength of the two parties, the moderates and terrorists, which divide the convention. The latter are generally supposed to be completely overthrown; but, in my opinion, the middle step, of inflicting, without a trial, the punishment of exile (some say to Cayenne, others to an island on the coast of Brittany) upon culprits whose crimes exceed credibility, is not only unjust, but evinces something like a compromise. The royalists, the Brissotines, and all others who have been lately freed from confinement, greatly dreaded the escape of these monsters, in the consequent triumph of their party. Poor Madame Kérvélligan, while it was pending, did us the honour, with some
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more ladies, to dine with us. You cannot picture to yourself terror like her's, lest the moderates should be defeated. She took from her pocket a paper, and read to us from it, with great encomiums, the speeches in the convention of Legendre, Isnard, and others who had declaimed against the *prevenus*; while she was enraged in an equal degree against those who had defended them, and resisted the return of the proscribed deputies (her husband is of the number) into the bosom of the convention, until they should be purified by trial. Lecoindre of Versailles was not spared upon this occasion. Mr. Kérvélligan is now in Paris; and who can wonder at her perturbation? Of the seventeen months which he lay concealed, she was shut up eleven a close prisoner in the château of Brest. If she do not hear from him by every post, she is miserable; not knowing, in the present temper of the times, who may be spared in a popular commotion. She and others declared to me, while the struggle lasted, that so exasperated were the two parties against each other, that they should not be surprized to hear, that they had had recourse to arms, and butchered one another

another in the senate-house. The days and nights of the 12th and 13th of *Germinal* were particularly terrible. The convention during the whole of them remained at its post, most of the members being armed with pistols to prevent assassination. In this commotion, of which part of a narrative, written by one who was on the spot, has been read to me, the cry of "*Vive Louis dix-sept!*" was once or twice heard, but it was faintly uttered, whilst "*Vive la re-publique*, and give us a constitution!" resounded on every side.

Immediately after this disturbance was quelled, expresses communicative of the event were dispatched into all the districts. The courier to this place arrived a little before noon on the 9th instant, and the drum was forthwith beat in every quarter of the town, inviting all "*good citizens*" to repair at two o'clock to the cathedral, to hear the account from Paris read, and to adopt measures in consequence of it. Being assured of not giving offence, I went at three to the place of appointment, and found the municipality, and about 150 people of the lower order, including a few officers, several
soldiers,

soldiers, and many women, collected. They were listening to a man who was mounted into the pulpit, and reading to them a *bulletin*, stating the circumstances of the attempt which had been committed on the national representatives, and of its suppression; also the names of certain members whose arrest had been decreed; and lastly, that General Pichegru was called in, to preserve by an armed force the peace of Paris from the machinations of royalists and terrorists. Every body wore their hats, and no insult was offered to us Englishmen, several of whom were present. When the reading was finished, an address to the convention was voted, on the patriotism and energy they had displayed; and several people got into the pulpit, and spoke in their turns. From these orators, a blacksmith was universally allowed to bear away the palm, haranguing with great fluency against the terrorists, and surprizing his auditors by the keenness of his sarcasms, and the justness of his observations. The speech of one who ascended the tribune was simply, "*Vive la republique!*" which was received with many plaudits. In conclusion they decreed, that the members of the ancient

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cient committee of *surveillance* of the town (which has long been suppressed) shall be deemed suspected persons, be disarmed, and obliged to appear every day before the municipality ; and that henceforth they shall not be eligible to any office of trust or power in their commune.

A mention of the committee of *surveillance* leads me to bring you acquainted with that infernal institution, which, of all engines that ever were placed in the hands of a government, was surely the most effectual to over-awe the citizens, and to promote the cause of despotism. The number and cost of this host of licensed spies were not less extraordinary than their power, which authorized them, without assigning any reason but a suspicion of incivism, to enter the houses of all the inhabitants, whom they pleased to say had been denounced to them ; to seize upon their persons, in order to deliver them over to the revolutionary tribunal ; and to break open their cabinets, and inspect their papers. There are in France forty thousand communes, and every commune had its committee, which, upon an average, contained ten members,

bers, the number in part depending upon that of the inhabitants. The salary of every member was five livres a day.

If therefore we multiply	- - -	40,000
	by	10
		<hr/>
the number of members will be		400,000
		5
		<hr/>
and the expence per day	- - -	2,000,000 livres ;
which multiplied by	- - -	365
		<hr/>
makes the annual expence	- - -	730,000,000 livres, or, at
		10 $\frac{1}{2}$ <i>d.</i> each, £.31,937,500.

The committee of *surveillance* of Quimper consisted of twelve members, whose names and occupations were as follows :

Botibon, retail shopkeeper,	Rose, - barber,
Harier, butcher,	Roland, - merchant's clerk,
Moreau, musician,	Morivan, - hog-butcher,
Becam, taylor,	Le Moine, gardener,
Cariou, taylor,	Montaigne, brazier,
Keroch, barber,	L'Hot, - printer's devil.

They were to a man the creatures of the creatures, ten gradations deep, of the committee of public safety. In such hands were
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the liberties and lives of Frenchmen deposited ! Even on the day I write, the institution is not totally abolished, but is momentarily expected to be so. It is still retained in towns which contain forty thousand inhabitants, or more, but is seldom allowed to exercise its powers.

The number of persons guillotined in Quimper was only four, two priests and two women. The *guillotine* was kept in the cathedral, but performed its office on the parade. It was customary to send to Brest those who were denounced, which was more convenient than to try them on the spot, where witnesses might have established their innocence : of this class there were many victims. I was told, when at Brest, that 172 persons of both sexes had been executed there. The operation is said to have been performed on 32 of the number in somewhat less than nineteen minutes.

It is impossible to pronounce the word *guillotine*, without associating with it its grand mover Robespierre, that modern Procrustes, who sought to contract or extend to the standard of his own opinion, a mighty people ; before whom neither elevation of virtue or talents could erect a shield,

shield, or insignificancy of birth and situation creep beneath a shelter. Without aiming to become his defender, I must, however, be permitted to observe, that many of the relations, which, on authority seemingly good, I every day hear and read of his towering ambition and capricious cruelty, are too extravagant to be credited, and, if true, too degrading to our nature to be repeated. In the general horror and indignation excited by his remembrance, I am sensible (especially among this declamatory people) that truth will often be sacrificed to passion. There is, besides, a second reason, that increases the distrust with which I listen :—to screen themselves from odium, all the subordinate tyrants fix upon him, and attribute to his orders, the innumerable butcheries and acts of oppression which they have perpetrated.—They who were once his closest imitators, are now loudest in their outcries against his memory ; which, in many instances, is loaded with the crimes of his contemporaries. I had not been taken twenty-four hours when Captain Le Franq, either from credulity, or a wish to impress me with an early belief of his not being
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attached to a sinking party, told me, among similar tales, that Robespierre had, in the town-hall of Paris, caused himself to be proclaimed, "Maximilian the First, Emperor of the French." Upon finding that a man, whose relative rank and situation in life entitled him to respectable sources of information, could thus, either from ignorance, prejudice, or a less laudable motive, be guilty of so gross a misrepresentation, it became doubly incumbent upon me to restrain my belief.

However outrageous the execrations of the French now are on hearing his name, they do not surpass the adulation with which they once approached the idol of his power. I wish I could send to you the *Gazette Nationale* of the 30th of *Pluviose*, which belongs to a collection of newspapers that I have access to, and contains a report of the 16th of *Nivose*, made to the convention by Courtois, in the name of the committee appointed to examine the papers of Robespierre. Never before was flattery so gross and servile used as some of these productions, which were addressed to him from different districts, *communes*, and popular societies. The

statue inscribed to the "*immortal man*;" and the poetic incense afterwards offered at his shrine by Boileau, fade before it. He is called in them the glorious, incorruptible Robespierre, who covers, as with a shield, the republic by his virtues and talents; who joins to the self-denial of a Spartan, or a Roman of early date, the eloquence of an Athenian. Even his tenderness and humanity of disposition are praised. One man congratulates himself on a personal resemblance of him; and another, at the distance of 600 miles, is hastening to Paris, to feast his eyes with a sight of him. He is compared, not by an individual but by a body of people, to the Messiah, "*annoncé par l'Etre Supreme, pour reformer toute chose*;" and afterwards he is said to manifest himself "*comme Dieu, par des merveilles*." On some occasion a *Te Deum* was performed for him, the burthen of the ditty being, "*Vive Robespierre! Vive la République!*"—I feel ashamed to transcribe any more of these impious and contemptible absurdities. I beg of you, however, to remark, when Courtois's report shall fall into your hands, that amidst the papers which have been scrutinized
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of this extraordinary personage, though incontrovertible evidence of his restless and sanguinary disposition appears, yet nothing bearing the marks of an arranged plan for mounting a throne, or erecting himself into a dictator, was found. Some trifling hints are once or twice thrown out, which the reporter does not fail to magnify; but Robespierre, if he ever really entertained such a project, was too circumspect to commit it to writing; and knew too well the loose nature of man to entrust his secret, until it were matured in his own mind, and could tempt to confederacy by its probability of accomplishment. I never reflect on the sudden and total apostacy of the French from this man and Marat, without indulging a hope that the versatile levity of sentiment, and unceasing desire of change, which characterize the nation, will at length point, in a spirit of repentant loyalty, founded on an unconquerable determination to be free, to the descendants of their kings. And this hope I am always willing to sustain, by calling to mind our restoration of Charles the Second; but at the same time I confess, that (at least

for the present) my observations pronounce it to be rather a conclusion which I desire, than a consummation which I expect.

By posterity then must Robespierre be judged. No scrutiny will reach his virtues, however it may exalt his genius. Vigour of mind he undoubtedly possessed, and he joined to it (except in moments of inebriation, to which he was sometimes addicted) profound dissimulation; but there exist unquestionable proofs, that he was a poltroon, which single flaw in his composition rendered his downfall certain. A combination of other causes might have prolonged his elevation, but could not have preserved it to the end of his existence. On how many occasions did Cromwell's personal intrepidity, and firmness of nerve, uphold him and his authority!

We owe candour more to a review of the worst than of the best of characters; and no man was ever more entitled to an indulgence of it than Robespierre.

The papers of the other members of the committee, of which Robespierre is believed to have directed all the springs, are also laid open,
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and are equally curious and shocking as his. There are among them orders, ready signed and sealed, for bringing to trial, and executing, those whose names might be inserted in the blank spaces. Juries, a venerable institution derived from *us*, have hitherto had very little claim to the gratitude of the French. In a report made to the convention by Saladin, in the name of the committee of 21, on the 13th of last *Ventose* (3d March) it is stated, that the managers of the committee of public safety, Barrere, Collot, Billaud, &c. held every evening conferences with the public accuser and the president of the revolutionary tribunal, who rendered to them an account of their proceedings, and received their instructions for the work of the next day.—On the following account you may also rely. A judge and jury were sent to Paris, from a place 200 miles distant from it, to give an account of their principles, for having condemned two men to ten years imprisonment, who, in the opinion of a representative who was present in the court, ought to have suffered death. The crime of the prisoners was, having said, that “ they

"wished to see the tree of liberty of their commune cut down."—The sentence was ordered to be quashed; they were tried again; and guillotined.

An extract of a letter, signed Darthè, found, after his execution, in the cabinet of Le Bas, is as follows. "*Le comité de salut public a dit à Le Bon, qu'il esperait que nous irions tous les jours de mieux en mieux. Robespierre voudrait que chacun de nous pût former un seul tribunal, et empoigner chacun une ville de la frontiere.*"

After this gentle wish (allowing it to have been uttered) which breathes more closely that of Caligula than any other that modern biography affords, you will, perhaps, think I have been too lenient to the memory of Robespierre. Remember, I only wish to apportion his share of guilt. The convention, by banishing the triumvirate, "until they can be tried at a period of more tranquillity," not only demonstrate a fear of the Jacobin party, but a secret apprehension lest many of themselves should be implicated in the transactions which such an enquiry would unfold. Hence the violent opposition to a publication of their papers by
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many of the moderate party, as well as that of their opponents. How indeed, in consistency, could those men, from whom they derived their powers, now turn their accusers?

To conclude an odious and debasing subject. The "*noyades, fuzilades, and republican mariages*" of Carrier at Nantes; joined to the exploits of Collot d'Herbois at Lyons, who chained together, at one time, four hundred people, in the great square of the city, and fired upon them with grape-shot, until they were exterminated; with many others equally diabolical, which shall not pollute my page, almost tempt one to believe, that a majority of the nation were at one time accomplices in its crimes and miseries. They have, indeed, at length awakened from their delirium, and sigh at the dreadful retrospect.

I have written until my paper is exhausted, my eyes bedimmed, and my imagination haunted by racks, wheels, and *guillotines* dyed in human gore.—Therefore good night! and adieu until to-morrow, when I will resume my pen!

L E T T E R X I.

Quimper, 1st May 1795.

AMIDST such scenes as I was yesterday condemned to describe, it were impossible but an universal corruption of manners must follow, and it has accordingly arrived. That the French should pant to be free, who can doubt, or who can blame? But it has happened to *them*, as it must to every people who are suddenly hurried into extremes, without the national mind being in any degree prepared for the change which has taken place. This people possesses not the stability of character, or the austere self-denying virtues, of the ancient republicans. Many of the present leading demagogues of the convention do not even affect a common regularity of manners; and, if the public journals, which do not spare them by name, may be believed, wallow in the most scandalous sensuality. I read the other day a description of a drunken scene between
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one of the Merlins and a brother deputy, which was pourtrayed with much humour. I mention this to shew you, that the editors of news-papers here are not more afraid of the executive power than on your side of the water. When I compare the present number of the convention to what it was at its institution, not three years since, and recollect the causes,—self-murder, public execution desertion, and banishment—which have occasioned the diminution, I stand petrified with amazement and horror. What stronger proof of the depravity of this legislative assembly can be adduced than their perpetual deliberate acts of treachery towards each other, in betraying private conversations, which have passed among themselves? Their annals are full of it. How many of their members have been hurried by it to the *guillotine*; and how many more have been supplanted in the public favour by the informers!

The thirst for dissipation is not lessened; but whence the means which enable many of the French to pursue it in its present form are derived, is a mystery. If the excessive and daily increasing price of commodities be considered,
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nothing is more inexplicable than how those who have only stipulated incomes contrive to subsist upon them. I live with the most rigid frugality, and yet cannot bound my expences within less than 250 livres a week. It is certain that false *assignats* abound; and the tongue of malevolence has not scrupled to assert, that many of them have been issued from the national treasury, "in order to lessen the public debt, when the day of presentation for payment shall arrive." Remember, I do not pretend to state this as more than the whisper of party. It is evident that the habits, which this plenty of the medium of exchange, however obtained, creates, are destructive of all industry. This little town is crowded by men and women, who, like the Athenians, do nothing from morning to night "but tell and hear of some new thing." The national fickleness demonstrates itself no less in private than in public opinion. In Paris alone, in the month of last *Nivose*, 223 divorces took place, 198 of which were solicited by the *wives*. Nothing is more specious than a facility of divorce. To render the chain of union indissoluble were, indeed, to realize the

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the punishment of Mezentius; but to permit its separation upon every trifling and momentary caprice, is to corrupt society in its source. You know that marriage is here a civil contract only, which I have seen entered into at the *bureau* of the municipality, and which consists merely in the parties declaring, before certain witnesses, their wish to be united, and entering their names in a register; but of late all but flaming republicans have thought it necessary to strengthen the engagement, by privately superadding the ceremony of the church.

The national taste has suffered equal degradation. The dramas of Racine, and the odes and epistles of Boileau, are supplanted by crude declamatory productions, to which the revolutionary spirit has given birth. The French have been almost as ingenious as ourselves. It was a discovery reserved for the present age, that Pope was a mere versifier; and that the immortal compositions of the two before-mentioned writers are harmonious tinklings only, devoid of fire of fancy, and elevation of genius. There has been a report presented to the convention, on the *Gothicism* which has overspread the

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the land, and exterminated in its fury more than two thirds of the works of art and taste, which ennobled France. It will be handed down to posterity, in the chronicles of the revolution, as a fact that marks the spirit in which it has been conducted.

Notwithstanding the various arms by which religion has been persecuted, she again begins to lift her head. A report, presented by Boissy d'Anglas, from the united committees of public safety, general security, and legislation, to the convention, containing ten articles in favour of public worship, has been adopted and decreed. By these the republic acknowledges no national religious institution; nor grants salaries to the priesthood; nor furnishes any place for the performance of worship, &c. &c.; but it expressly forbids, under pain of punishment, every one from preventing his neighbour from the exercise of his devotion.

In consequence of this decree on the back of the proclamation issued by Guesno and Guerneur, and of assurances from the constituted authorities that they shall not be molested, the moderate catholics here assemble on every Sabbath

bath in the cathedral, the use of which (as an indulgence) is granted to them; but the more rigid, fearless of the law (which forbids it) hold little meetings at each other's houses, where the non-juring clergy officiate. This is known to the police; but the predilection of the country people, who flock in great numbers to these assemblies, renders it convenient to wink at them, and has hitherto restrained all attack upon them.

I went upon Easter Sunday to the cathedral, and found a numerous congregation there. The altar was lighted up by twelve large waxen tapers; the holy water was sprinkled upon the congregants; and the incense was burnt, with the accustomed ceremonies; but even here democratic spleen manifested itself in disturbing what it is no longer allowed to interdict. In the most solemn part of the service, the *Marseillois Hymn* was heard from the organ: that war-whoop, to whose sound the bands of regicides who attacked their sovereign in his palace marched; and which, during the last three years, has been the watch-word of violence, rapine, and murder!

murder*! How incongruous were its notes in the temple of the Prince of Peace! A black-guard-looking fellow close to me, whom I knew, by his uncombed hair, dirty linen, ragged attire, and contemptuous gestures, to be a *veritable sans-culotte*, joined his voice to the music, and echoed, "*Aux armes, citoyens!*" Fear alone kept the people quiet; and of its influence in this country I have witnessed astonishing proofs, which demonstrate, beyond volumes of reasoning, the terror inspired by the revolutionary government.

As the observance of the Sabbath advances, the *Decadis* sink into contempt. I had heard much of civic feasts and other patriotic institutions celebrated upon them; but since I have been here, nothing of the sort has occurred. The national flag is displayed on the public offices, and if there is no pressure of business,

* I was once carelessly humming, at a fire-side, the *Carmagnole*; when a lady, suddenly interrupting me, exclaimed, "For God's sake cease that hateful tune! It brings to my remembrance nothing but massacres and guillotines."

the clerks have a holiday. A few zealous republicans also shut up their shops; but at present for one shop shut on a Decadi, there are six on a Sunday; for, however their owners may differ on political questions, a sense of religion is not extinguished in the mass of the people, even of the town. I have, nevertheless, been assured, that six months ago, to have shewn this mark of respect for the Sabbath would have been a certain mean of drawing down the resentment of the predominant faction. On every Decadi the laws are appointed to be read in the cathedral, and the municipality attend. I had once the curiosity to go to this meeting, and found the number of auditors, which I counted, exclusive of the reader, and those who attended officially, to be twenty-seven persons, of whom, to my surprize, five were old women.

Were I not bound to attend an appointment at twelve o'clock, in the event of which I am deeply interested, methinks it were a curious speculation (to which I incline) to try to developé what will be the probable state of France, when peace with all her neighbours shall be restored to her. The thinking part of
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the nation survey, not without alarming anticipation, the consequence of a million and a half of armed men, to whom a habit of indolence is become familiar, being turned loose upon a country whose specie has disappeared, whose foreign commerce is annihilated, and whose manufactures must be *born again*, for hardly a trace of their having ever existed remains : add to this, that the government, by being no longer revolutionary, will lose its strong executive spring : and that the people are split into innumerable parties, which hate each other with irreconcilable inveteracy.

National prejudices and political antipathies I consider as a vile state engine, which, in the hands of a few crafty men, has for more than five thousand years wrought the misery of the human race. Englishmen and Frenchmen, the Charib and the Hindoo, the philosopher of Europe and the naked savage whose wanderings I have witnessed at Botany Bay, shall one day, I presume in humble confidence to trust, be assembled before the "living throne," of a common Father ; and look back on that diminutive speck, which in the boundless ocean of infinity

Infinity nothing short of divine irradiation could make visible to their eyes;—to review with unqualified contempt, sorrow, and repentance, those false principles, and sanguinary conclusions, which rendered it unto them a theatre of contention and horror, and caused their days to be “few and evil!”

If such be my sentiments, I have no right to wish calamity to France. I do not.—May she conclude peace with her neighbours; and labour to settle her own government; and render happy her numerous children! But when I look forward to the completion of such an event, I think I foresee so many long years of havoc, which have yet to urge their course in this devoted country, that I will drop the curtain, and hasten to meet ———. Adieu.

L E T T E R X I I .

MY DEAR —, Plymouth, 11th May, 1795.

CONGRATULATE me. The circumstances which led to my obtaining permission to come to England, prove me fortunate beyond example; and as I think them honourable to French generosity, I shall not omit to record them.

I arrived here yesterday, in a little Danish brig bound to Copenhagen, which ran off the Sound, and made a signal for a pilot. One of the Cawland boats in consequence pushed out to us, and received Admiral Bligh, his two young gentlemen, and myself. We were soon landed; and I am happy to tell you that I found

The packet which accompanies this will explain to you my hopes, and the measures which I intended to pursue, at the time it was written. The Admiral's liberation and passport arrived

arrived on the 2d instant; and, on his request for his *aid-de-camp* and interpreter to accompany him, the good commissary made no scruple of furnishing me with a passport to go to Brest, upon pledging myself to return, in case my application to the representatives might be rejected. Having bidden adieu to my friends, I set out on the following morning on horseback, with the Admiral and the two boys in a carriage, the best the town afforded, without springs, and with traces made of ropes. Our sudden departure was in consequence of knowing that an embargo, which had subsisted for some time, was just taken off, and that several American vessels were ready to sail for England. We travelled about thirty-six miles, through a country which is full of young promising corn, indicating a plentiful crop, and appearing not to have suffered from wanting husbandmen to sow it. About four o'clock we reached a village, whence there is a ferry about ten miles across to Brest. Here we embarked, with more than a dozen country people, who were carrying the produce of their farms to the next day's market. Only one of them could

speaking French, who satisfied the curiosity of the rest about us. They made their supper of *crêpe*, and were abundantly thankful to us for a remnant of a piece of cold veal which we had brought with us, some bread, and a little wine, which they ate as luxuries. Owing to a contrary wind, it was midnight before we got abreast of the harbour's mouth; when we learned, by hailing a vessel, to our unspeakable mortification, that all the Americans had sailed in the course of the day. The circumstance of having missed, by being a few hours too late, an opportunity, the fellow of which might not arrive for months, joined to the apprehensions and perplexity of men in our situation, on entering into a garrison-town like Brest, at so unseasonable and suspicious an hour, rendered our feelings very unenviable. We wanted the boatmen to land us at the town, and to shew us to an inn, where we might be accommodated with beds; but this they peremptorily refused to do, telling us, that we might every moment expect to be hailed by one of the forts, and ordered on shore to give an account of ourselves. This happened, as they had foretold, in a few minutes,

nutes, when we were summoned through a speaking-trumpet to land within some pallisades at the point of the dock-yard. A serjeant and a file of men received us, and conducted us immediately to their officer at the guard-house, a tall well-looking young man; who after having inspected our passports, and listened to our wishes, very civilly offered to accommodate us as well as he could in his guard-room, or, if this proposition were not agreeable, to send a serjeant with us to knock up an inn. We were grateful for his politeness, and begged to accept the latter, requesting permission to leave our baggage under his care until morning, which was complied with, and a serjeant was directly sent away with us. We had, however, but just passed one of the barriers of the dock-yard, when we were stopped by a municipality patrol, who, notwithstanding our conductor's explanations and remonstrances, carried us all forthwith to their guard-house, and gave us to understand, that we must pass the night there as well as we could. This treatment enraged us; and I bade them recollect that they were offering an unnecessary indignity to a "General

"*Anglais*," who had not entered Brest without ample and sufficient authority, and who would certainly represent their interference and impertinence, on the next morning, to his friend Admiral Villaret, and the members of the convention on mission here. This resolute tone, to which the Admiral desired me to give full force, had quickly its effect, and this *bourgeois* collection of tinkers and taylor's thought proper to send us under an escort to a neighbouring inn; but it was now become so late, that, after having knocked at the door for more than half an hour, we were obliged to return to the guard-house, and take up our lodging there: the Admiral sitting up, on a bench, by the fire, and the two youngsters and I lying down on the guard-bed with the soldiers.

In the morning we took our leave with very little ceremony, and repaired again to the inn, where we found admission. After breakfasting, and rendering our dress as decent as we could without our baggage, we went, as we had been directed at Quimper, to the office of the maritime agent, and produced our passports. He received us very properly, and furnished us with

tickets to shew in case of being stopped—an event not unlikely to happen to English officers walking in their uniforms about the streets of Brest. Our next visit was to Monsieur Villaret, whose reception of Admiral Bligh, and whose undeviating conduct to us both while we remained here, was friendly, polite, and flattering in the extreme. I had never before seen him, and had now the honour to be introduced to him by Admiral Bligh, as his *aid-de-camp*. His frank and gentlemanlike manners at once won my esteem. He appears to be between forty and fifty years old, is of an engaging countenance, well made, of a middle size, and has a military carriage. Upon hearing where we had left our baggage on the preceding evening, he directly dispatched his own coxswain for it, and it was brought to us safe and entire. But his goodness to me (as the friend of an officer whom he so highly respected for his gallant defence of his ship, as Admiral Bligh) must be particularly stated to you. No sooner was the predicament in which I stood made known to him, than he offered his interest to back my application to the representatives; and insisted that

we all should immediately set out to their office to undertake it. Upon our arrival there, we were introduced to one of them, Champeaux, an old man, who at Admiral Villaret's intercession consented at once, without starting a difficulty, to my being allowed to accompany my Admiral, and promised me a passport.

Our only difficulty now was to find a conveyance. Admiral Bligh therefore expressed a wish to his friend that he might be suffered to hire a boat, which he would engage to send back immediately on being landed on the nearest part of the English shore. This proposition (which, considering the times, was rather of a delicate nature) was acceded to by Monsieur Villaret; who added, that he would take care that she should be properly fitted and victualled for us; however in the afternoon a lucky occurrence prevented us from putting his generous zeal to serve us to farther proof:—An American gentleman, who knew our situation, brought a little Danish master of a brig to our inn where we had dined (Admiral Villaret being engaged to the representatives) with whom we presently concluded an agreement for our passage.

face. As the Dane wished to depart on the next day, it became again necessary to trouble Monsieur Villaret to urge the completion of our passports for sailing out of the harbour; and for this purpose he appointed to meet us at nine in the evening, at the house of the representatives. Thither, at the hour agreed upon, we repaired, and found him. He conducted us into a spacious garden, and introduced us to the representatives, Topsent, Vernon, and Harmand, who received us with great cordiality; and when they learned that Admiral Bligh had been all day in town, chided Admiral Villaret for not having brought us with him to dine with them. These gentlemen, however, declined taking any part in granting the passports until the arrival of their colleague Champeaux, who was momentarily expected. We, therefore, continued walking on the terrace, and conversing on general subjects, which unavoidably led to the grand and only enquiry that seems to agitate the minds of Frenchmen:—the politics of the day, as connected with the revolution.—They spoke in respectful terms of our national character, and pathetically lamented the war between England
and

and France, calling it an unhappy and fruitless contest to both parties. It was, they said, past human comprehension to account for the ceaseless implacable enmity between two nations, which by their valour, opulence, and enlightened character, were fitted to hold the balance, and dictate the tranquillity of Europe. I listened in silence. These men had no *sans-culottism* about them, either in their manners, language, or dress; the two first were civil, moderate and correct, and the latter was gentlemanlike and respectable. Had it been my desire, it was not my interest, to interrupt or oppose them. I ventured, however, once or twice to slightly demur at one of their propositions, in order to draw out their sentiments more fully; which occasioned these words (from Vernon, I think) to be repeated with emphasis, "*France will be a republic! and England neither shall, nor ought to, interfere in our internal concerns.*" This conversation made a deep impression upon me, and was, I am confident, introduced in order that the Admiral (to whom I interpreted it) might communicate it on this side of the water. It differed but little from others which I had often,

often heard on the same subject during my captivity; but the rank and situation of the speakers from whose lips it fell, render it memorable to me.—Finding that Champeaux did not come home, about ten o'clock we retired to our inn, being first given to understand, that I might be sure of meeting him in his office at six o'clock next morning, being the hour at which he always entered upon business.

At a few minutes before six on the following day I renewed my visit, and waited but a short time before I was admitted to Monsieur Champeaux. He was sitting in his office, in an elbow-chair, dressed in a flannel jacket abominably filthy, and smoking a short black pipe, exactly such an one as the old women in Ireland carry about in their mouths. It brought to my mind Sir William Temple's descriptions of those old burgomasters, who formerly, with so much plainness, wisdom, and integrity, conducted the affairs of the Batavian republic. I had no more reason to complain of my reception now than on the preceding day. He told me that he did not wonder at my impatience, and that I should wait for what I wanted only
until

until a clerk should come in. "But," added he, "our clerks are *fainéants*." Ah! thought I, if this honest gentleman could take a peep, at this early hour, into an English public office, where vigilance for the common weal never slumbers!—His affable compliance removed a mountain from my mind. I now took an opportunity of presenting Admiral Bligh's compliments to him, and requesting, as an acknowledgment of his politeness, that he would name some French officer, a prisoner in England, whose release he might be interested about, and that he might depend on his being sent home. The old man bowed, and, recollecting himself for a moment, wrote down the name of a *Quarter Master*, who was taken in l'*Atalante* frigate, and is now in prison at Kinsale in Ireland, begging that I would give it to the Admiral with his thanks, and perfect reliance on his good faith. I continued to wait; but no clerk entering, although some other company did, I slipped out, and planted myself on the stair-case, where I had not remained long before a grave sober official-looking character came forward.—"Pray, sir," said I, "do you
"belong

"belong to the office?"—"Yes, citizen."—I told him my business in few words, and having been similarly situated in an English office, when I begged his assistance, looked as if I would be *grateful*. "Are you sure, citizen, that you have seen the representative?"—"Perfectly sure."—"The representative Champeaux?"—"Yes."—"Then follow me, and your business shall be done."—With a bounding heart I accompanied him into his office. When he had finished writing the passports, he took them in to the representative to be signed and sealed, and I amused myself as well as impatience, not unmingled with fear, lest some unforeseen impediment should be started, would allow, by looking about the room in which I was left alone. Opposite the door was written, in large characters, "Whatever servant of the republic shall accept of a fee or gratuity, for transacting the public business, shall forfeit his place, and be farther punished." There was also stuck up on the wall a satirical print of certain characters among us, who shall be nameless, in very ludicrous attitudes and situations.—He soon returned with the passports completely executed,

executed, and presented them to me, in such a manner as convinced me, that to have offered a reward to him, for having simply performed his duty, would have been construed into an insult, and perhaps have been attended with unpleasant consequences to myself.

I hurried to the Admiral with my credentials, and we lost no time in getting on board, and urging our departure from the port, which to our unutterable joy took place about eleven o'clock last Tuesday. A northerly wind prevented us from arriving here till yesterday.

The shortness of my residence in Brest, and the state of hurry and anxiety in which it was passed, almost preclude me from offering to you any remarks about it. It is very strangely laid out, on the side of a hill, and long flights of steps connect different parts of the town. It is certainly much larger than either Portsmouth or Plymouth, and contains some handsome public buildings, exclusive of the naval arsenal, which, you may be sure, I did not enter after the first night, when it was too dark to make any observations. The French are said to be making vigorous preparations here; but when we ran
through

through Brest-Water, there were only nine or ten sail of the line ready, or nearly ready, for sea. As we sailed along, I cast a look of exultation at my old jail La Normandie. At the harbour's mouth we were boarded by a guard-boat, the officer of which offered not any interruption to us, upon seeing our passports.

I had almost forgotten to mention that before we embarked we heard that Le Franq, the captain of Le Marat, was cashiered, for being a *Robespierrist*; and that he, with many others, was obliged to shew himself twice a day at the office of the municipality, as a caution against his elopement. We did not see him, and by no means thought him entitled to much commiseration.—Admiral Villaret gave us the information.

To the civility of Mr. Anderson, the American consul, we were indebted, not only now, but when we were formerly at Brest. My two old friends of the prison-ship, on hearing of my arrival, found me out, and came to sup with us at our inn.

Our expences ran very high during our short
stay

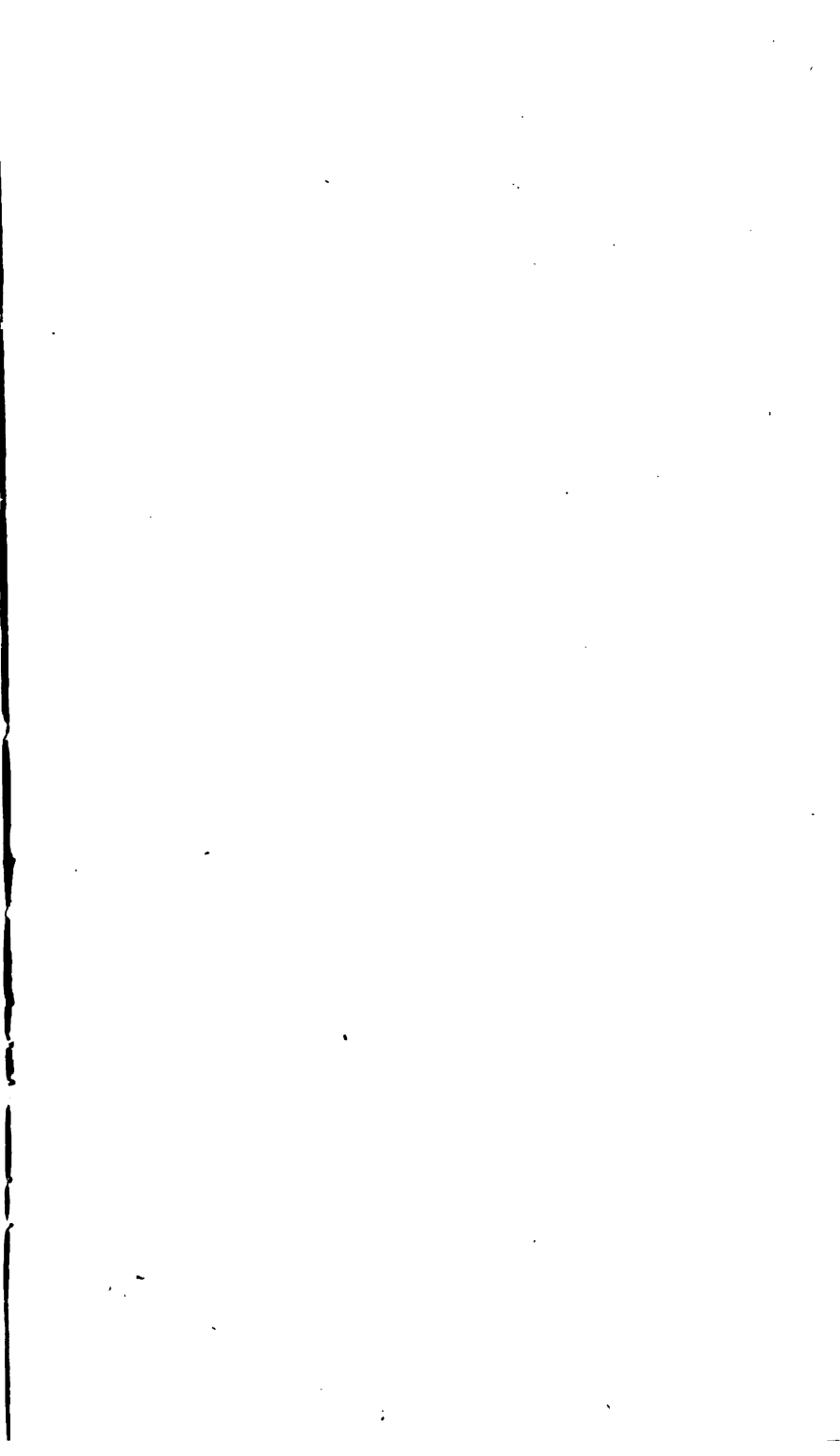
stay at Brest. We dined, at a very middling ordinary, at fifteen livres a head; and for tolerable wine after dinner were charged nineteen livres a bottle; every other article being proportionably extravagant.

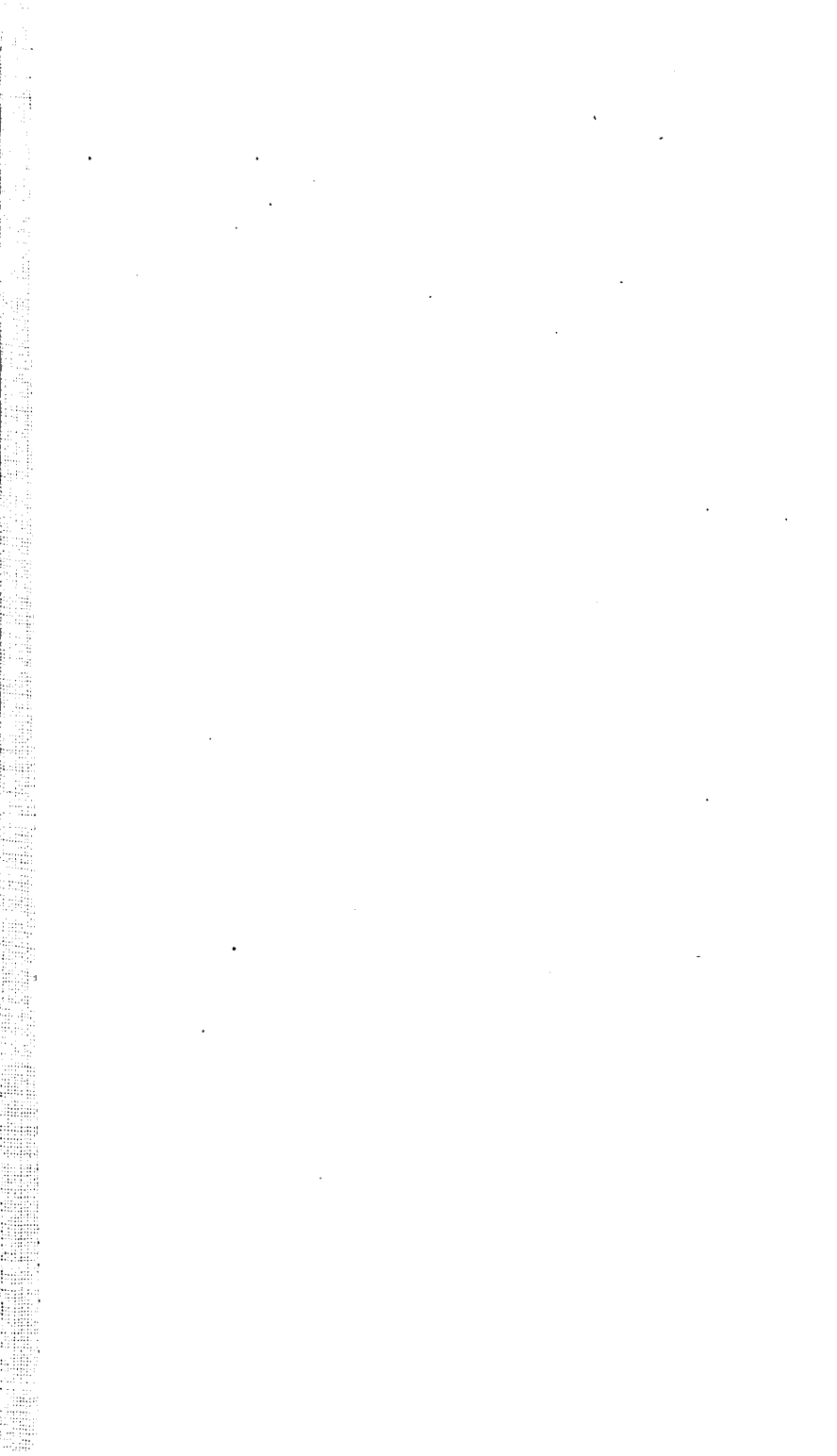
I wait here only for _____
_____ Expect to see me in
town in a week. — Adieu. -

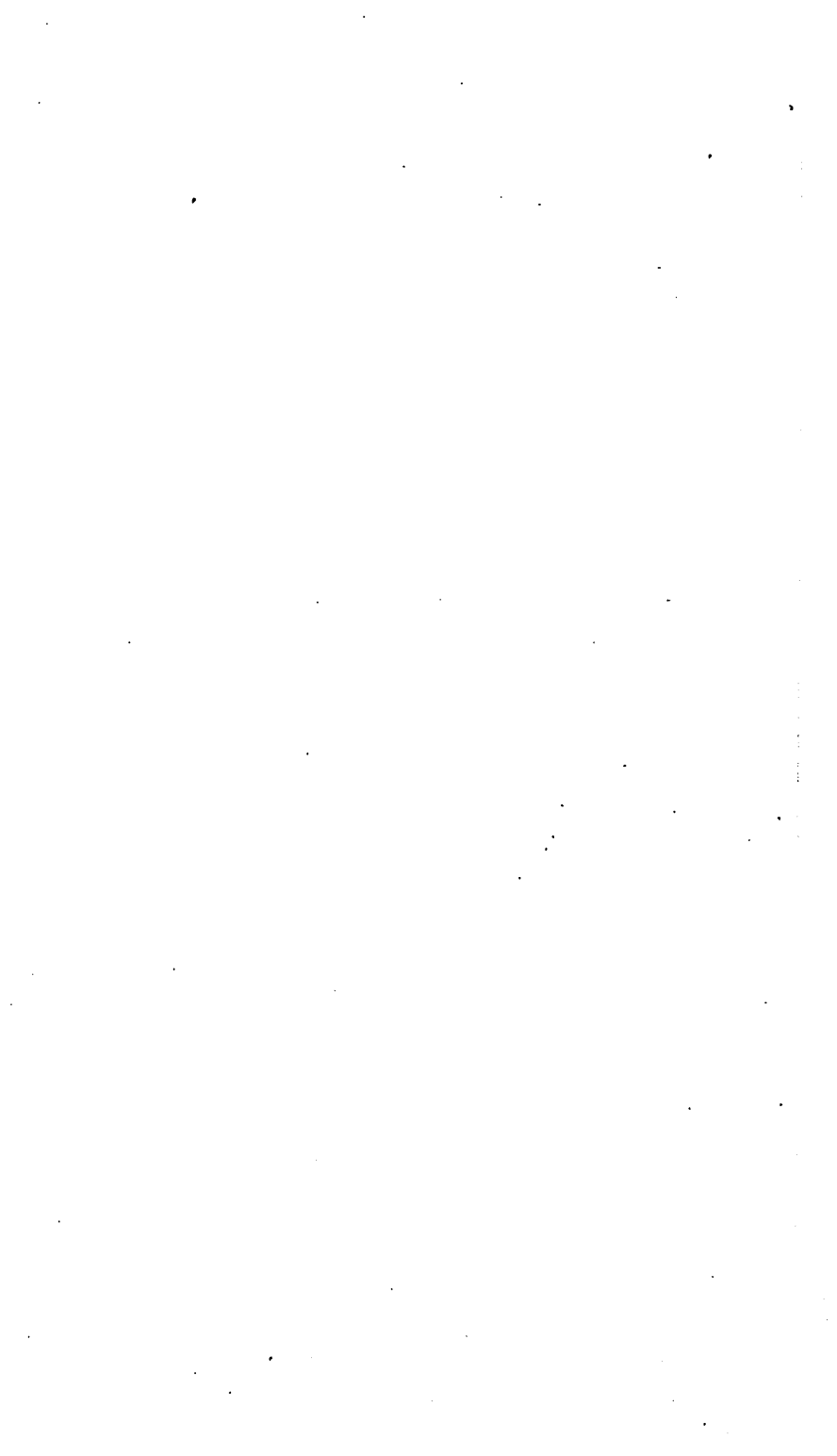
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